



Mysticism and Sufism

Exploring Ibn Arabi,

www.ebnearabi.com

[September 2024]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Rulings

1. Grand Ayatullah Sistani

Question-1:

Among the contents attributed to Your Eminence on some websites, it is claimed that you support the gnosis of the author of Fusus al-Hikam (Ibn Arabi), please express your respectable opinion in this regard?

Answer:

I believe in the method of the great jurists of Twelver Shi'ism in obtaining religious wisdom, which is in accordance with the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the pure infallibles of the Household, peace be upon them, and I do not approve the above-mentioned method.

Signed and sealed by:

Syed Ali Sistani

8th Muharram, 1433 Hijri

03-12-2011

Source: استفتاء از معظم له درباره عرفان صاحب فصوصی

باسمه تعالی

محضر مبارک آیه الله العظمی آقای سیستانی دام ظلّه العالی

با اهداء تحیات وافره به عرض عالی می رساند :

با توجه به مطالب منسوب به حضرت تعالی در بعضی از سایتها مبنی بر تأیید (عرفان صاحب فصوصی) تقاضا می شود نظر شریف را در این رابطه اعلام فرمائید .

بسم تعالی

اینجانب در ارتباط با معارف اعتقادی به روش اکابر علمای امامیه (قدس الله اسرارهم) که مطابق با آیات قرآن مجید و روایات اهل بیت عصمت و طهارت (علیهم السلام) و با مستند بوده و روش فوق الذکر را تأیید نمی نمایم .



۸ / محرم الحرام
۱۴۳۳ هـ

Question-2: How can a person strive against oneself and discipline his soul to cleanse it of vices and moral impurities and practice religious austerity? Is it possible to achieve religious spirituality without a guide? Knowing that despite reading many books in this field, listening to sermons, meditations and trying really hard, he is not able to develop his personality, and he feels despair and lost, and he seeks guidance from Your Eminence to help him get out of this situation.

Answer: Meditation and legitimate austerities do not require a mentor. For this purpose, it is sufficient to follow the manuals of jurisprudence and to combat oneself in avoiding forbidden lusts. But it is not obligatory to abandon legitimate desires if one does not overindulge.

Source: alseraj.net/fitwa/13704-2

Question-3: Respected Marja' Ayatullāh al-Udhmā Sayyid Ali al-Sistani Dāma Dhilluh,

As-Salāmu 'alaykum wa Rahmatullāhi wa Barakātuh.

From time to time we come across some characters amongst the youth in the institutes of higher religious learning (Hawzāt al-ʿilmiyya) and other places, who claim to be endowed with ʿIrfan and inner purity, and they allege to have attained certain levels of nearness to Allāh, the Glorified and Most High. They say that their mission is turning the community towards Allāh through certain recitations (adhkār), incantations (awrād) and special gatherings. And it has been noticed that a group of youths might respond to their calls by believing their claims while others view this conduct and these movement with doubt and suspicion. So is it permissible to (accept and) rely on the people who make these claims and to trust them, and to act upon their advice and respond to them? Or is it necessary to be cautious of them and keep a distance from them? Please give us your fatwa – your reward will be great; and may Allāh protect you with honour and illumination.

- A group of students from the Hawza ʿIlmiyya

Answer:

In His Name, the Most High.

There is no doubt that every believer should be concerned with purifying the soul and refining it from lowly traits and blameworthy attributes, and adorning it with lofty morals and praiseworthy attributes in preparation for obedience to Allāh, the Most High, and in refraining from His disobedience. However, the path to this is what has been mentioned in the Glorious Book (The Qur'an) and the Noble Sunnah, from the remembrance of death to (recalling) the evanescence of this world and the difficulties of the hereafter, including Barzakh, the Resurrection, the Assemblage (on the Day of Judgment), the Accounting (of deeds) up to being presented in front of Allāh, the Most High, and remembering the attributes of Paradise and its bounties and the horrors of Hell and its inferno, and the outcomes of (one's) deeds and their results, for indeed this helps in being God wary, Glorified and Most High is He, and obedient to Him and to safeguard oneself from falling into sin and (facing) His wrath, just as the Prophets and the Vicegerents (peace be upon them all) have advised, and what the godly scholars have acted upon, generation after generation. And this path is clear with no dubiousity, and there is no excuse for the one who turns away from

it. The only way that the state of a person is known is by seeing how much his conduct conforms with this course and how much it doesn't. For indeed men are gauged by (their conformity with) the truth, and whoever gauges the truth by (the acts of) men falls into Fitna and strays from the right path.

Amīrul Mu'minīn ('a) had warned against one of the ignorant people from among those who innovated things based on their desire and who claimed to be one of the learned scholars so he gathered a group (of followers) around himself, saying: "The only things that give rise to disturbances (Fitnas) are the base desires that are acted upon and the commandments that are innovated. By these the Book of Allāh is opposed and people gain mastery over others through that which is against the religion of Allāh. For if wrong had been pure and unmixed with truth it would not be hidden from those who are in search of it. And if right had been pure without admixture of wrong those who stubbornly resist it would have been silenced. What is done, however, is that something is taken from here and something from there and the two are mixed. At this point Satan overpowers his friends and only those for whom virtue has been appointed by Allāh beforehand, (manage to) escape." (1)

Among the signs of people who make claims which are false is their exaggeration with regards to purification of the soul in contravention to what Allāh has commanded, and directing others towards the extremism in them, and feeling no need to follow the well known methods employed by the jurists in deriving religious rulings, and their claim of arriving at these laws and at the basis (milākāt) of religious rulings through esoteric means, and their issuing religious verdicts without having acquired the competence (to do so), and the taking advantage of beginners in teaching and learning, and having a special attachment to those who submit to them and an enmity with those who do not follow their way, and their slandering of the one who detaches himself from them after having believed in them, and their adopting ways that are not conventional in order to set themselves apart from the people of knowledge and the lay people. And their exaggeration in dependence on dreams and what they claim to have perceived in (certain) spiritual states. And their differentiation from others in their form of dress, attire and appearance, (and their) justifying this by saying that this is something that has been mentioned in the traditions, without taking into consideration the secondary implications which are considered by the jurists in such matters.

And among these signs is (bringing about) innovation in religion and recommending certain exercises that have not been promoted by the Prophets and the Vicegerents (peace be upon them all), and basing their claim of something being recommended (mustahab) on unreliable sources using the excuse of ‘al-tasāmuh fi adillat al-sunan’ (2), and also being influenced by the people of other traditions and religions. And being tolerant of what is considered to be a kind of music and musical tune (and/or form of singing) that is prohibited. And of certain types of inter-mingling between the (non-mahram) men and women, and reliance on financial sources that are not known, and having ambiguous and doubtful affiliations and other such things that a discerning believer does not engage in.

And indeed we advise all the believers, may Allāh grant them success to attain His pleasure and remain steadfast, and not to allow themselves to easily trust these types of claims, for indeed this matter is a debt that is owed to Allāh, so whoever follows a leader of (true) guidance will be resurrected behind him and his path leads to Paradise, and whoever follows a leader of misguidance will be raised with him on the Day of Judgment and he will drive him into the fire of Hell. And let everyone who is in this situation ponder over the condition of

those who came before them and how they fell into misguidance because of their following the likes of the afore-mentioned. We pray to Allāh to keep everyone away from innovation and base desires, and to make us successful in following His true ordinances in emulating the course of the godly scholars (al-ulamā' al-rabbāniyyun), for indeed He is the Master of Success. And peace be unto you and all the brothers in faith, and the Mercy and Blessings of Allāh.

28th Rabi' al-Awwal 1432 AH

Signed: Sayyid Ali al-Hussaini al-Sistāni

Footnotes:

(1) Khutba no. 50 of Nahj al-Balāgha.

(2) A concept of the principles of jurisprudence (usul) wherein it is argued that one can act upon weak narrations when it comes to recommended actions (mustahabbāt).

Source: [إستفتاء حول العرفان](#)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سماحة المرجع الديني الأعلى آية الله العظمى السيد علي السيستاني دام ظله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ، و بعد : فاتنه يظهر بين الحين و الآخر اشخاص في وسط الشباب في الحوزات العلمية او غيرها يدعون انهم يتصفون بالعرفان و صفاء الباطن و يزعمون لانفسهم مقامات في القرب من الله سبحانه و تعالى و يقولون ان رسالتهم هي توجيه المجتمع الى الله بالاذكار و الاوراد و المجالس الخاصة ، و لوحظ انه قد يستجيب لهم جمع من الشباب تصديقاً لدعائهم ، في حين ينظر آخرون الى هذه التصرفات و الحركات بعين الريبة و الشك ، فهل يجوز الاعتماد على اصحاب هذه الدعاوى و الثقة بهم و العمل بوصاياهم و الاستجابة لهم ، او يجب الحذر منهم و الابتعاد عنهم ؟ افتونا ماجورين و حفظكم الله عزاً و مناراً .

بسمه تعالى : لاشك في انه ينبغي لكل مؤمن الصائبة منزلة النفس و جديها عن الحاصل الرذيلة و الصفات الذميمة و تحليها بحكم الفضل و بحمل الصفات استعداداً لاطاعة الله تعالى و جدها من محضية ، الا ان السبل الى ذلك ماورد في الكتاب العزيز و السنة الشريفة من استنكار الموت و فناء الدنيا و عقبات الآخرة من البرزخ و السور و الحشر الصائبة و العز على الله تعالى ، و تذكر اوصاف المحبة و دفعها و احوال النار و جيعها و آثام الاعمال و نتائجها ، فان ذلك مما يعين على تقوى الله جلّه تعالى و طاعته و التوقى من الوقوع في محضية و محطه كما اوصى به الانبياء و الراسخين عليهم السلام و عليه العلماء الربانيين جليلاً و جديلاً ، و هذا طريق واضح لا سرفيه ، و لا عذر لمن يخلف عنه ، و اما يعرف حال المرء بمقدار مطابق سلوكه مع هذا النهج و عدمه ، فان الرجل يعرفون بالحق و يعرف الحق بالرجال وقع في القسوة و ضل عن سبيل السبل . و قد حذر امير المؤمنين (ع) عن بعض اهل الجمل ممن يدعون دعواه امراً و يدعون انه من العلماء و جمع حوله مرقياً من الجمل قائلاً : « انما يدعون و وقع الفتن اهلوا تسع و اهلهم تسبع يخالفون كما كاد الله و رسوله عليهما السلام ان يزلوا عن دين الله ، فلما ان الباطل طعن من مزاج الحق لم يمسح على المرادين ، و لو ان الحق لم يمسح على سائر الباطل الا عن ائمة المائتين ، و لكن يؤخذ من هذا ضعف و من هذا ضعف فخرجان ، فخصالك ليسوا بالسيطرة على اوليائه و ليعرف الذين سبق لهم من الله الحسنى » . و من علام اهل العادى الباطلة ما يفتنهم في تركية انفسهم و عزلا ما امر الله تعالى به و توجيب الاخرين الى الغلو فيهم و الاستغناء عن المناهج المعروفة لدى الفقهاء في السيطرة و الامكان الشريعة و دعوى الوقوف عليها و على ملاكاتها من طريق الامور الباطنية و التصدي للفساد من غير استعصال العقلية لها و استغلال المبشرين في التعليم و العلم ، و المولادة الخاصة لمزاجهم و المعاداة مع من لم يحرم على انفسهم و الوصية فمن اسلخ منهم بعد الايمان بهم و سلوك سبل غير معارفة لتمييز عن غيرهم من اهل العلم و علمائنا و المبالغة في الاعانة و على المنافع و ما يدعون ترائيه لهم في مخالفة المحنوبة و المعنى في السور و الزينة و المظهر عن الظن ، مسكاً في حصنة بانه عمل ما نور من غير ملاحظة الجواب الباطنية التي قد لها العقيدة في مثل ذلك . و من تلك العلامات البشيرة في الدين و الوصية بالرياضات التي لم تعهد عن الانبياء و الراسخين (ع) و الامتساك فيما يدعى استجابة الى ما ورد في عصار غير موثوقة تدعى بالسماح بحلالة السنن ، و ايضا التمسك باهل الملا و الاديان الاخرى و الساهل في ما يعترض بها من الموسع و الانحاز للصائبة المحرمة و وجوه اعتلال اهل النساء ، و الاعتماد على عصار عالمة غير معروفة و ارميات عاصفة مرموقة لا غير ذلك كما لا يخفى على المؤمنين العظماء و انما اوصى عامة المؤمنين و فقهاء الامم المرصنة بالنسب و عدم الاسترسال في الاعانة على مثل هذه الدعاوى ،

فان هذا الامر قد يبان الله تعالى به ، فمن اتبع نام هدى حصر خلفه و كان مسيلاً الى الجنة و من اتبع نام ضلال حصره من ديم اقامة و ساءة الى النار و ايضا مل الجمع في هذا حاله كما في كلمتهم كيف وقع الكبر فيهم في الاضلال اقصاع امثال من ذكر ، نسأل الله تعالى ان يعيب الجميع البدع و الاوهاء و توقضا للعلم السليم الحنيف مقدرين بسيرة العلماء الربانيين انه وفي الوقوف . و السلام عليكم و على جميع اخوان المؤمنين و رحمة الله وبركاته .

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٤٨/٤٨
عبدالله

2. Grand Ayatullah Safi Golpayegani

Question-1: I am a young boy and I want to ask for a set of spiritual rules from your highness so that a revelation may happen to me, even if it is a short one, which, God willing, could strengthen my faith?

Answer: Son! In the beginning of your youth and at the age of responsibility, take inspiration and instructions from the Holy Qur'an in the light of narrations and authentic supplications, such as those in as-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya, and do not waste your time and life in pursuit of this idea of supernatural disclosure and mystical revelation, which some even profess to have experienced.

There is just so much out there to discover. All these proofs and signs of God and the discoveries that the human mind has made by thinking about the cosmos: the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the systems of galaxies, mankind, animals, living things, and the vast world of plants and the human psychology, etc. are all means of enlightenment and revelation of the truth.

There is no such concealed knowledge and religious wisdom that can be acquired through mystic revelation. To contemplate about yourself, your own creation, the wonders of the creation of universe and all these secrets

and signs of God and the reality, is revelation in itself. Is not what you see with your two eyes, enough? Are all these clear depictions that you see, not signs and proofs of the unseen world that you want to strengthen your faith by knowing God through visions and supernatural revelations?

گر اهل معرفتی هر چه بنگری خوب است
که هر چه دوست کند همچو دوست محبوب است
کدام برگ درخت است اگر نظر داری
که سرّ پاک الهی در آن نه محجوب است

All these different plants, all these fruits with variety of flavors and attractions, all these colorful blossoms and flowers are signs of God.

برگ درختان سبز در نظر هوشیار
هر ورقش دفتری است معرفت کردگار

Contemplate and think, read the book of creation: look at the wonders of the land and the oceans, potentials of humans, characteristics of plants and stones. Ponder over it all. All of it is revelation, discovery and witnessing.

God has revealed himself to everyone with these signs of his omnipotence and divine wisdom. Every small part and section of this world is a big book of discovery and revelation, but man must wish, and see, and praise the glory of God. The Quran says:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ. (سوره الذاریات،
الآیات 20، 21)

Translation: “There are countless signs on earth for those with sure faith, as there are within yourselves. Can you not see?” (51: 20, 21)

Is revelation not achieved by all these verses of the Qur'an? Why should we go after the revelation in the form of a dream, and not realize the revelation by considering the creation of the sky and the earth, which is the real revelation, unlike the made-up revelations of mystics?

Intellectual journey in the horizons of soul, natural science, zoology, anthropology, hydrology, soil science, botany, etc., is a means of revelation. Why are we going far away? Why not explore oneself!

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ (1)

“Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord.”

تویى تو، نسخه صنع الهی
بجو از خویش هر چیزی که خواهی

If all human intellect is conferred on one person to think in himself for centuries and centuries, his self exploration will not end. The true discovery and revelation is as the saying goes: from whatever you observe around yourself and from what phenomena appear to you outwardly, discover the underlying truths. True revelation comes from meditation on the verses like this one:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي
خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ
النَّارِ. (سورة آل عمران – الآية 190 – 191)

Translation: “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying]: Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.” [3: 190, 191]

On this path, what is important and makes a person more successful is diligence in worship and following the rulings of religion, adherence to the guidance of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), piety, self observance, and avoiding sins as well as the undesirable acts.

I hope that you, dear young man, will succeed in attaining the highest levels of knowledge, character, morality and benevolence, and especially would remember the Imam of the time and the axis of existence, our lord the Twelfth Imam al-Mahdi, peace be upon him. Let's not forget Him and try to please Him by our actions and good behavior, which is the ultimate ambition. (2)

Question-2: As in the case of specialized fields, such as the knowledge of Hadith, it is necessary to obtain permission from an expert, is permission of a mentor necessary in reciting the supplications narrated from the infallible Imams (peace be upon them)?

Answer: In order to recite supplications, it is sufficient for a person to recite supplications and remembrances from authentic books such as the books of Allama Majlesi, and the book “Misbah ul-Mutahajid” by Sheikh Tusi and “Mafatih ul-Jinan”, and the opinion of some particular person and his permission is not required.

Rather, some of the programs based on similar excuses – i.e. permission from some guide is obligatory, which mystics and some others claim and do – are baseless, and some forms of these are heresy and forbidden. In short, the program of prayers and worship and all duties should be in accordance with jurisprudence and the guidelines of the infallible Imams, peace be upon them, and one should not imitate the fabrications of others. (3)

References:

1. Muhammad Muhammadi Rey Shahri, “mizan ul-hikmah”, vol. 6, p. 142, No. 11923, reported from Ghurar ul-Hikam, no. 7946.

2. Grand Ayatullah Safi Golpayegani, “ma’arif-i deen”, vol. 3, question 265, pages 328 – 332, Qom, 1391 Hijri Shamsi.

3. Grand Ayatullah Safi Golpayegani, “ma’arif-i deen”, vol. 3, question 224, page 275, Qom, 1391 Hijri Shamsi.

3. Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Sadiq Rouhani

Question: What is opinion of your Eminence regarding the path of Ibn Arabi? Was he a devotee of Ahlulbayt (PBUT) or not?

Answer: In the name of the most Exalted; Ibn Arabi in his book Futuhat al-Makkiyyah considers himself dispensed with the knowledge of Imam of the time, and introduces God as exactly all things, and maintains that people like Muawiyah and al-Mutawakkil were guides in both apparent and hidden worlds, and allows himself to test the monotheism of Prophets and fails them, and in a world of spiritual disclosure and revelation, shows Shias as pigs, and other nonsense like that leaves no room for questions about his path.

Source: Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Sadiq Rouhani, “ajviba tul masail”, vol. 2, question 291, page 132, Qom, 1432 Hijri Qamari.

۱- انظر مبارک معظم له راجع به این عربی صاحب فتوحات و قصوص از جهت تشیع یا عدم ان چیست؟

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

محیی الدین ابن عربی در کتاب فتوحات مکیه - خود را مستغنی از کتب امام زمان می داند - و خدا را عین همه امسیا معرفی میکند - ولایت ظاهر و باطنی برای افراد کمال معاویه و متوکل قائل است - و بخود اجازه میدهد از اینها امتحان توحید بگیرد و همه مردود بداند - در عالم کشف سهود شیعه را بصورت خنزیر ببیند و غیر اینها از مغز خرافات، بنویزد در باره او شک دارد که سؤال میکند

۲- آیا مطالب مندرج در آثار مکتوب وی که معارض با ضروریات مذهب شیعه می باشد را می توان حمل بر تقیه و استضعاف فکری و قصور وی دانست؟

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ابداً ممکن نیست

الروح الطاهر



4. Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Ishaq Fayadh

[Excerpt from a lecture]

We have heard that in this blessed seminary (of Najaf), mysticism courses are being introduced which follow the books of Ibn Arabi. And this is a danger for the seminary, especially for our young students. Anyone who has read the books of Ibn Arabi approves that he is a heretic (zindeeq), and he has no faith in Allah Almighty.

True spirituality is in the divine rulings, that is the comprehension of jurisprudence of the Household of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny. This is the real theosophy. And the real commitment to true spirituality means insight into the divine rules and living by the jurisprudence of the Household of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny.

True piety is acting on this jurisprudence, as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

«إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ»

“Surely the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you.” (49: 13)

In hadith, piety has been interpreted as adherence to divine obligations and avoidance of sins. This is the essence of piety.

Popular mysticism claims discovery of the hidden secrets and unveiling through mystical revelations. This knowledge of the unseen is nothing more than an illusion and has no substance in it, and it is not supported by empirical evidence. It is also an explicit contradiction of the Holy Qur'an. God Almighty says:

«عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهَرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَى مِنْ رَسُولٍ»

“He knows the unseen, disclosing none of it to anyone, except messengers of His choice.” (72: 26-27)

Therefore, teaching of these courses is a danger for the seminary and especially for the youth, and it is obligatory for us to be vigilant about these developments.

Grand Ayatullah Is'haq al-Fayadh

December 2011

Theology

1. Mulla Sadra's philosophy is a dead horse

Ancient philosophy was a collection of what so-called wise men of ancient times thought about the world, most of which was incorrect. Problems of theology and abstract ideas of ontology were placed under metaphysics, and the poetic speculations about the outside world were collected under physics, which had little in common with today's rich natural sciences. The same methods were used to address both types of questions and they failed miserably in understanding nature for two thousand years. The foundation of modern natural science was laid after we got rid of these methods and instead started using mathematical reasoning and rigorous experimentation to capture the complexities of nature.

Murtadha Mutahhari describes the etymology of the term 'metaphysics' as follows:

“Aristotle (d. 322 BCE) was the first person to discover this discipline as a distinct field of knowledge and gave it a special place among other disciplines. But Aristotle did not give any name to it. After Aristotle, his writings were collected in an encyclopaedic form, and at the time of arrangement, this section was placed after the material related to physics. Since these writings had no

common title, the name metaphysics was given to them, indicating what came after the chapters of physics.” (1)

He continues:

“Later, among the modern pseudo-philosophers, this verbal and translation mistake led to an intellectual mistake. A large group of Europeans considered the word metaphysics to be equivalent to supernatural and thought that the subject of this knowledge is things that are outside of the physical world. And now, as we have established, the subject of this knowledge includes nature and beyond nature and ultimately everything that exists.” (2)

Mulla Sadra (d. 1641) also emphasizes the unity of physics and metaphysics and believes that a school of thought that fails in physics, cannot be trusted with its metaphysics. His works are basically an exegesis and appropriation of what Plotinus (d. 270 AD) wrongly speculated. Mulla Sadra was completely out of touch with his contemporaries in the West, like Galileo (d. 1642), Kepler (d. 1630), Descartes (d. 1650), and others, who had started to break free from chains of Greek myths and illusions. His book “Asfar-e-Arbaa” is his major contribution to Neoplatonism, and it has been translated into several languages in recent decades.

The Arabic term “Asfar (أسفار)” is the plural of “sifr (سِفْر)”, and it means large books. In the Holy Qur’an, this word is used for large volumes of books carried by a donkey:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا ۚ (سورة الجمعة، الآية 5)

Translation (Yusuf Ali): “The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) Mosaic Law, but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes (but understands them not).” [62:5]

The modern edition of this book published by Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-’Arabi from Beirut in 1980’s spreads over three and a half thousand pages, most of which is incorrect and void of any intellectual value. In this book, Mulla Sadra castigates the Shia theologians of the time due to differences in theological opinions and ridicules them for not knowing physics. He writes:

و هم بالحقيقة أهل البدع و الضلال. و قدوة الجهلة و الأردال شرهم كلهم على أهل الدين و الورع و ضرهم على العلماء. و أشدهم عداوة للذين آمنوا من الحكماء و الربانيين هذه الطائفة المجادلة المخاصمة. الذين يخوضون في المعقولات و هم لا يعرفون المحسوسات و يتعاطون البراهين و القياسات و هم لا يحسنون الرياضيات و يتكلمون في الإلهيات و هم يجهلون الطبيعيات(3) .

Translation: “Indeed, these people are heretics and perverse, the leaders of the ignorant and the vile. All their wickedness is reserved only for the people of religion and piety and their hostility is directed at the scholars only, and their fiercest enmity is against the believers among the sages and the divine saints.

This polemicist and the litigant group delve into the intelligible while they do not know the nature of physical things. They want to practise reasoning and inference even though they haven’t finished the math. They like to discuss theology while they are ignorant of physics.”

Ironically, Mulla Sadra’s own physics, i.e., his understanding of nature, has proven to be totally absurd. His own ideas about motion, light, sky, space and time, symmetry, random processes, nature of life, the chemistry and substance of things, the function of the human brain, diseases, heredity, psychology, love, etc. are nothing but fiction.

For example, he intensely advocates the idea of substantial motion (الحركة الجوهرية), which he himself attributes to the medieval Arabic translation of Enneads – work of Plotinus – known as Theology (الاثولوجيا). (4) We now know that change happens due to the spatial

gradient of energy, i.e., external forces, as illustrated by Newton's second law. In the absence of force or gradient of energy, there is no motion, no change. Therefore, the ripening of an apple is caused by energy gradients produced due to sunlight, temperature, and the chemical energy of the molecules produced by the plant and atmosphere. The substance of an apple is made of divisible molecules bonding together due to supramolecular forces. It ripens when the molecular composition changes under external causes.

Using this knowledge, derived from Newton's laws, scientists have devised ways to regulate fruit ripening processes and improve yield. On the other hand, the dogma of substantial motion, or intrinsic flux, which was first proposed by Heraclitus (d. 480 BCE) long before Plotinus, has no precise predictability and connection to real-world phenomena.

Mulla Sadra's complete failure in physics leaves no room for a cautious believer to trust his metaphysics. Ayatollah Jawad Tehrani (d. 1989) writes:

“When I started to study medieval philosophy, I did not trust all the elders' wisdom; I had previously understood that modern sciences and contemporary scholars reject the views of ancient philosophers in physics and

astronomy. Therefore, whatever I read, I was very cautious about its perception and analysis, and verification of the authenticity of the content, and for this reason, I did not ignore any objection that came to my mind, and that in which I did not have the power to recognize the truth from the false, I did not accept it in blind imitation or good faith. As if I kept reminding myself: those who have made mistakes in natural sciences, how can they be infallible in theology and not make mistakes? And especially when I realized that these philosophers have differences and quarrels among themselves in theological issues, I wondered: How can the truth in the matter be known from their words?

Anyhow, the main theme of my personal story is that since my teenage, by the grace and blessings of Almighty God, I have been a seeker of the truth; But neither Qur'an nor Hadith led me to the monotheism of mystics. Yes, to make sense of their ideas and claims, I had to go to some other realms of thought, other than these.

Rather, I would say: It is not possible for someone who follows the school of Quran and Hadith to contemplate the interpretation of monotheism by mystics!" (5)

Grand Ayatollah Lutfullah Safi Gulpayegani (d. 2022) says:

این حضرات بر اساس تئوری های خود برای ماسوی الله نقشه ای فرضی کشیده بودند و تشکیلات کیهان و افلاک را تعیین کرده و به گمان خودشان نقشه ربط حادث به قدیم و صدور کثیر از واحد را نوشته بودند؛ گویی این که همه جا و در همه تحولات و ادوار عالم با خدا بوده اند و بر این اساس عالم عقول و مجردات را عنوان کرده و سلسله هایی در نظر گرفته بودند که با ظهور علوم و فنون جدید بطلان بیشتر نقشه هایشان ظاهر شد. راه صواب و مصون از خطر این است که در این امور انسان به اخبار پیغمبر صادق مصدق اکتفا نماید (6).

Translation: “Based on their theories, these gentlemen had drawn a hypothetical layout for God’s creation and determined how the universe and the planets came into being, and in their own imagination, they had outlined the relation of the accident to the eternal and emanation of multiplicity from the one. It is as if they were with God everywhere and witnessed all the transformation and stages of the universe, and based on this, they proposed the worlds of intellects and abstracts and constructed imaginary concatenations, and with the advent of modern science and arts, the invalidity of their theories became even more obvious. The right way is for a person to rely on the narrations of the truthful and authenticated Prophet (PBUH) in matters of faith.”

References:

1. Murtadha Mutahhari, “kuliyyat-i ulum-i islami”, vol. 1 (Mantiq – Falsafa), page 135, 1381 Hijri Shamsi.
2. Murtadha Mutahhari, “kuliyyat-i ulum-i islami”, vol. 1 (Mantiq – Falsafa), page 136, 1381 Hijri Shamsi.
3. Mulla Sadra, “al-hikma al-muta’aliya fil-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba’a”, vol. 1, page 363, dar ihya’ al-turath al-‘arabi, Beirut, 1981.
4. Mulla Sadra, “al-hikma al-muta’aliya fil-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba’a”, vol. 3, page 111, dar ihya’ al-turath al-‘arabi, Beirut, 1990.
5. Ayatullah Jawad Tehrani, “arif wa sufi che mi guyand”, page 323, Afagh publications, Tehran, 1390 Hijri Shamsi.
6. Grand Ayatullah Safi Golpayegani, “sharh-i hadith-i arz-i deen”, page 107, Qom, 1394 Hijri Shamsi.
2. The seduction of philosophers and mystics – Grand Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani

2. The Greco-Muslim philosophy is neither compatible with Islam nor science – Grand Ayatollah Ishaq Fayadh

[Excerpt from a lecture]

As for as philosophy inspired from mysticism is concerned, it has no foundations. Their idea of mysticism is of revealing hidden secrets. This philosophy claims to unveil the truth and know the unseen. Whoever claims so has actually gone against the Quran. Allah has revealed that no one except his chosen messengers can know the unseen. [72: 26-27] Anyone who claims to have a secret knowledge of hidden world is a liar. He has discredited the Quran.

As long as the theoretical aspects of Greco-Muslim philosophy are concerned, those can be classified into Physics and Metaphysics (general Greek theology). Greek Physics has become obsolete and gone to the winds. Science has revolutionised in present age. It has reached the peaks of discovery and exploration.

The physics part of Mulla Sadra's philosophy is nothing but pure imagination and illusions. It has no value. As far as its metaphysics is concerned, it has two categories: the core theology and the general theory.

The general theory covers concepts like existence, substance and accident. It is clear that lectures on principles of jurisprudence discuss these in depth. Those lectures have more details, although these discussions are scattered in different chapters. But these discussions in books on Muslim philosophy have remained stuck with outdated ideas, without any evolution or major improvement.

As far as the theology part is concerned, philosophers are stuck in troubles from which they have no escape. It is because they see God as the complete cause of everything. It raises problems that they can't solve.

How can the relationship of cause and effect be established between transient things and the eternal? Secondly, the effect should be compatible with the cause. Cause and effect cannot be incommensurable. The emanation of such effect would be impossible. So if Allah is complete cause of things, there should be an existential correlation between Him and the things. ([42:11] There is nothing like Him. **لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ**) Because effect represents a level of existence of the cause, emanates from the cause and isn't in contrast. It is impossible for the cause to be eternal when effect is transient.

Therefore the greco-muslim philosophy seeks refuge in vain imaginations and illusions. So they mentally constructed the ten intellects, the longitudinal and lateral intellects, the extended existence (copied from Proclus), unity of being, etc.

All of this is pure imaginations and illusions, with no objective truth. (Following Plotinus) they believe that the creation emanates from Allah in succeeding stages. This is complete nonsense.

Therefore, the theology part of philosophy is nothing but myths and fantasies, with fluid interpretations. On top of all this, these ideas can result in deviation from the core concepts of Faith. This becomes evident in the discussions on free will and predestination.

Topics discussed in theology are foundations of Faith. In religion, these concepts have definite meanings. Therefore, there is no space for speculative reasoning. We cannot apply deduction to derive an article of Faith.

There is no place of 'ijtihad' in definitive and necessary matters of religion. 'Ijtihad' even has no place in fixed matters of practical jurisprudence. Here, the relation of the common believer to the 'source of emulation' is not that of a follower.

At this point I conclude commentary on this matter. May Allah bless you all with healthy, happy and long life and grant you ability to serve humanity and faith.

3. The seduction of philosophers and mystics – Grand Ayatollah Lutfullah Safi Golpayegani

Since the time of Al-Ma'mun (d. 833 CE), when the philosophy of the Greeks got introduced to the Muslims, the holy texts of Islam and the fundamentals of religion became targets for the interpretations of philosophers. Therefore, they molded the meaning of texts on their opinions. And the culture of disregard for the dictums of Sharia and their misinterpretations in accordance with principles of ancient philosophy, even (Aristotelian) physics, took root. Thus, they distanced themselves and the people from the textual themes of religion, like the idea of the unity of God and His attributes, the accident and eternity, the Creator and the created, etc. They interpreted these ideas in a way that did not agree with the apparent meaning of the text.

So, they built their faith on conjectures and anticipations, and they interpreted religion in a way that was not intended by its founder and the rightful interpreters (PBUT). They reasoned about religious wisdom on foundations that were laid by those who did not follow the path of the prophets and were not enlightened by the heavenly rays of guidance. So, their minds became unconstrained, and they wandered away in these paths and came up with strange terminology that

does not comply with the terminology of the Noble Qur'an. And they became captive to alien concepts like affirmation (الإيجاب), incarnation (الحلول), union (الاتحاد), and unity of being (وحدة الوجود).

They interpreted the relationship between the accident and the eternal as the connection of the effect to the cause, not as the relation of creation with the Creator, and these themes are clearly different. There is no comparison between the relation of the Creator to the creation and the relation between cause and effect. What is comprehended from the second term is not meant by the first, and what is understood by the second is not conveyed by the first. The two paths are not the same and do not reach the same destination.

The causes can come in sequence, like the first cause followed by the second, . . . , etc, but the Creator can't be labelled as first, followed by a second creator, and so on. Similarly, the effect can be a sequence of the first effect followed by the second and then the third, and so on, but the creation is not sequential, such that the first would create the second, and then the third will follow, and so on. [Yes, some reports in the Hadith literature say that God created this or that first (أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ) . . .) but what is meant by it is not what these people intend to say in sequential causality, i.e., the first effect is the second

cause and second intellect, and the second effect is the third cause from which the third effect originates, and so on . . .] So all the creation, even if some of it longitudinally fell before others, is created by only one Creator, attributed equally to Him, and not sequentially like the second effect, who is the third cause, is the effect of the first effect and the second cause, and so on.

And the books of the philosophers, along with that content which might even appear to be in agreement with the revelation of the heavens, do not agree completely with it and what is established by the Book and the Sunnah. In it is wheat and the chaff, therein the truth and the false are mixed, certain themes agree with what the prophets brought and some contradict it, and that is because they, especially the ancient philosophers, who might ceremonially have clung to some customs of old religions brought by prophets, had over the time become renegade in their thoughts and their minds had become void of prophetic guidance.

And those (Muslim) philosophers who followed them stepped on their footprints and went along the same lines as them, except that they sought to create a bridge between the ancient philosophical dogmas and the teachings of the Book and the Sunnah. It is as if they wanted to mould the religion into what their minds had

come to believe in. Therefore, only a few of them could avoid mistakes, stumbling, and slipping.

Therefore, we see that great contemporary sages used hyperbole to emphasize the misreading by famous Muslim philosophers of the belief of bodily resurrection (معاد جسمانی), which could be an exaggeration, may God save us from it. [For example, see the treatise of Mulla Ismail ibn Muhammad Husayn Mazandarani (d. 1763 CE) on interpreting the Quranic verse: And His Throne was on the water. [11:7 وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ]] This is despite the fact that they were speculating about topics that they were not required to investigate, instead they were forbidden from going deeper into them.

Do those who follow the path of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and others, are on the right path or the ones who are guided by the light of Muhammad and his household, may God's blessings be upon them, and who follow their path? We do not make any hasty generalization in judging specific individuals as belonging to the first category or the second, and we hope that most of the Muslim philosophers belong to the second group. As for their reckoning, it is up to God Almighty.

The temptation of the Mystics and the Sufis

Among those who misinterpreted the holy text and moulded its meaning according to their whims and fantasies, the most deviant ones, harmful and unbecoming of them are the Mystics and the Sufis.

They manipulated the fundamentals and branches of religion and adjusted them to their unscrupulous opinions to justify their malicious deeds. They wrote flimsy treatises in delusive terminology. They forbade the good and enjoined the evil. They came with a variety of different cult orders and diverse rules and customs for spiritual transcendence, something that contradicts the explicit proclamations of the holy text. Their interpretations are weaker than the spider webs.

It suffices you to read some of their books, the biographies of their saints, and their poetry to come to know that they are as far apart from faith and religion as the earth and the sky. May God save the Muslims from their wickedness. They went astray because of their absurdity and preoccupation with occultism and their withdrawal of *Thaqalayn* (ثقلين) – the two treasures of guidance.

The most dangerous among these to themselves and to others are those who have produced a blend of the so-

called gnosis and the Greek philosophy, thus adding fuel to the fire.

If someone wants to know what the Mystics and their followers are up to, they should refer to the exegesis of the Quran written by Mulla Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani (d. 1335 CE), in which one can find many such misrepresentations.

For example, in the parable of the noble verse: <<And look at your donkey>> [2:259 وَأَنْظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ] the donkey is speculated to be the Prophet Ezra, (1) the small hills of Safa and Marwa are interpreted as heart and soul. (2) In the verse <<As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city>> [وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ] 18:82 وَيَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ], the boys are interpreted as theoretical wisdom and the practical wisdom. And in the verse <<created you from a single soul>> [خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ] 4:1 وَوَاحِدَةٍ], the soul is interpreted as the rational spirit, and in the verse <<and out of it created its mate>> [وَخَلَقَ] 4:1 مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا], the mate is interpreted as the animal spirit.

Their literature contains plenty of misinterpretations of the holy texts. Those who are interested may refer to Fusus al-Hikam of Ibn Arabi (d. 1240 CE), etc. Here I

do not want to elucidate any further, as my intention was only to point out their corruption in brief.

References:

1. Tafsir Mulla Abd Al-Razzaq al-Kashani, vol. 1, p. 147.
2. Tafsir Mulla Abd Al-Razzaq al-Kashani, vol. 1, p. 100.

Source: Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani, “Lamhat-un fi al-Kitab wa al-Hadith wa al-Madh’hab” [لمحات في الكتاب والحديث والمذهب], vol. 3, pp. 388-392, Grand Ayatollah Safi publications, Qom, 1391.

4. Material resurrection and return of the extinct – Grand Ayatollah Nasir Makarem Shirazi

Resurrection of physical body does not mean that only the body will be restored on the day of judgment, rather it means that both the soul and the material body will be returned. While all scholars agree on the return of the soul, the material resurrection is subject of dispute.

Some of the philosophers only believe in spiritual resurrection. They consider the body to be a container that accompanies man only in this world, and after death, the soul abandons the body and migrates to a spiritual world. But the great theologians of Islam always held that resurrection shall be both spiritual and material.

Some philosophers (like Mulla Sadra) do believe in return of the body, but they speculate that non-material bodies will be created for the afterlife. Because the essence of humans is the soul, and therefore it shall be reincarnated in a non-material body in the hereafter. Once associated with the soul, this imaginal body could be identified as their own body.

But the specialists of theology (like Nasiruddin Tusi) believe that the same material body whose particles have been scattered, shall be revitalised by the will of

God. So the same cells shall be restored to start a new life. This is the belief that appears explicitly in the Quran.

There are so many evidences in the holy Qur'an about the physical resurrection that it can be said with certainty that those who believe in the spiritual resurrection only, have not given the slightest thought to most of the verses of the holy Qur'an. Otherwise, there are so many verses in the holy Qur'an supporting resurrection of the material body that there is no room for doubt.

The last verses of chapter Yasin make this fact perfectly clear because the nomadic Arab was wondering how could the decayed bone in his hand be revived. The holy Qur'an responds in very clear words:

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ ○ (سوره يس، آيت ٧٩)

Translation: “Say: they will be revived by the One Who created them the first time, for He has perfect knowledge of every created being.” (36: 79)

All the polytheists were wondering about the matter of physical resurrection, that when we become dust and our particles are also spread here and there in the earth, how

can we be resurrected? The holy Qur'an mentions their opinion:

وَقَالُوا إِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ○ (سوره حم سجده، آیت ١٠)

Translation: “And the disbelievers say: ‘When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be created anew?’ In fact, they deny the meeting with their Lord.” (32 : 10)

They used to say:

أَيَعِدُّكُمْ أَتَّكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَ عِظَامًا أَتَّكُمْ مُخْرَجُونَ ○ (سوره مؤمنون، آیت ٣٥)

Translation: “Does he promise you that once you are dead and reduced to dust and bones, you will be brought forth alive?” (23: 35)

The infidels and polytheists used to be so dubious about the day of judgment that they considered those who believed it to be slanderers and lunatics. The holy Qur'an mentions it:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ يُنْبِئُكُمْ إِذَا مُرِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَرِّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ○ (سوره سباء، آیت ٧)

Translation: “The disbelievers say: Shall we show you a man who claims that when you have been utterly

disintegrated, you will be raised as a new creation?” (34: 7)

The Qur'an argues in favour of the material rebirth. In addition, the holy Quran has repeatedly reminded that you humans will come out of your graves on the day of judgment. See, for example, (36: 5), (54: 7). The word “graves” indicates material resurrection. We know that grave is the place of bodies which have become dust, not the place of the spirits.

Many spiritual and material attributes of heaven have been described in the Holy Qur'an, all of which point to the fact that both the body and the soul should be present on the day of judgment, otherwise the virgin companions (houris), the adolescent servants (ghilman), palaces, heavenly foods and material pleasures would be meaningless.

It is not possible for someone who is familiar with the logic and structure of the holy Qur'an to deny material resurrection. Or in other words, according to the Qur'anic worldview, the denial of material resurrection is denial of resurrection itself.

In this regard, apart from the arguments presented in Qur'an and Hadith, there are other rational arguments that if we want to present them, the discussion will

become cumbersome. Anyhow, now we discuss the resurrection of the consumed body. (1)

The story of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH)

Many interpreters and historian have mentioned the story of prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) in context of this verse:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (سوره بقره، آیت ۲۶۰)

Translation: “When Ibrahim said: O God, show me how you bring the dead back to life, God responded, Do you not believe?’ He said, I do, but I wish my heart to be reassured.’ So God said, ‘Choose four types of birds, and mix their flesh together, and place portions on the top of mountains. Then summon the birds, and they will come hastening to you. You will then know that God is empowered over all things and is aware of the truth of all things.” (2:260)

One day prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was passing by a river. He saw the body of a dead animal on the bank, part of which was inside the river and part outside.

Animals from both the river and the land were eating it. Moreover, they were fighting over it.

This scene made prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) think about a problem that everyone wants to explore in detail and that is the condition of the dead coming back to life after death.

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) began to wonder what if the same thing happens to the human body and it becomes part of the animal body, then how will it be revitalized in the resurrection? While in the hereafter, a person has to rise with the same material body.

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) said: “Lord! show me how will you raise the dead? God Almighty said: do you not believe in this? He said: I have faith but I want my mind to be satisfied.”

God ordered him to take four birds and slaughter them and mix their meat. Then divide this combined meat into several parts. Place each part on a separate mountain. After that, call these birds to see them fly back alive.

He did so and saw with great surprise that the particles of the birds gathered from different places and they came flying to him, starting a new life.

The paradox of the consumed body

The reason why Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) requested to witness the scene of the resurrection of the dead has been explained in detail. From which it is clear that Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) wanted to see how the body of an animal that became part of the body of other animals, could return to its original form? In theology, this is called the paradox of the consumed body (شبهة الأكل والمأكول).

The paradox is as follows: if we say that God will return humans with the same material body in the resurrection, both body and soul together, a problem arises when a person's body decays after death, and its particles are absorbed through the roots of trees and become part of fruits and vegetables. And then another person eats those fruits or vegetables and they become part of his body.

Or, for example, if a person eats the flesh of another person during a famine, then on the day of judgment, which of the two bodies will the particles become part of? If they become part of the first body, then the second body will become defective, and if the second body is made of these particles, then the first will remain incomplete.

Answer

Scholars of theology have given different answers to this ancient objection. It is not necessary to discuss every one of them here. There are some scholars who could not give a satisfactory answer. That is why they had to interpret the verses related to the return of the body allegorically and they said that the true self of humans is their soul and spiritual attributes.

But, the human personality is not only the soul, nor are the verses related to the return of the body such that they can be interpreted allegorically. Rather, as we have already explained, the verses argue quite clearly in favour of material resurrection.

Some philosophers came up with the idea of resurrection of an imaginal body, which apparently explains physical resurrection, but it is not significantly different from the spiritual resurrection.

We will examine the issue here in the light of the holy Qur'an, following a clear path to an answer which is also compatible with modern science. However, to explain it, there is need to ponder on few facts:

1. We know that the cells of the human body change repeatedly from infancy to death. Even brain cells,

though not much in numbers, still change in composition. Nutrients enter the cells and certain products of metabolism, leave as waste materials. On the other hand they continue to break and replaced by new cells.

In summary, in less then ten years, nothing is left of the previous cells of the human body. It should be noted that when some cells leave for the valley of death, all their properties and traces are carried into new and fresh cells.

This is the reason why all the characteristics of human body, from color and appearance to other physical traits, remain in place over time. And this is because properties of old cells are transferred to new cells.

Therefore, the last cells of every human being, which turn into dust after death, have all the attributes that they have acquired throughout the life. And these attributes are the record of the entire life of that particular body, which ends up in the grave.

2. The essence of human personality is the soul. But it should be noted that the soul is nurtured along with the body, and the evolution and progress of soul and body depend on each other.

Just as two bodies do not resemble each other in all respects, no two souls are identical.

Therefore, no soul can survive without full compatibility with and function of the body with which it has been nurtured and developed.

Therefore, it is necessary that the same former body returns in the resurrection, so that the soul can start its activity anew in the higher stages and be blessed with the rewards of its deeds.

3. Every cell of the human body has all the physical information about the body. That is, if we actually take a cell from a body and make a complete human from it, then that human will have all the attributes of the person whose part was taken.

In the beginning of life, a human is not more than a single cell. The first cell is made from the sperm and egg of the parents. It had all the potentials of a human being. Gradually it divides and becomes two cells. Then two become four and gradually all the cells of the human body come into being.

Therefore, all the cells of the human body are like the first cell, if they are nurtured like the first cell, then each one will be a complete human being in every respect.

Which will definitely have the qualities of the human being born from the first cell.

It is clear from our discussion that such a body does not raise any objection to the possibility of physical rebirth and the verses in which this meaning is clearly stated do not need allegorical interpretation. (2)

References:

1. Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi, “Tafsir Nemooneh”, vol. 18, p. 487.
2. Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi, “Tafsir Nemooneh”, vol. 2, p. 223.

5. The origins and sects of mysticism in Muslim societies – Mufti Jafar Hussain

Amír al-mu'minín Ali (PBUH) said to `ÁSim ibn Ziyád, who had put on a woollen coat and cut himself away from the world: “O’ enemy of yourself. Certainly, the evil (Satan) has misguided you. Do you feel no pity for your wife and your children? Do you believe that if you use those things which Alláh has made lawful for you, He will dislike you? You are too unimportant for Alláh to do so.”

He said: “O’ Amír al-mu'minín, you also put on coarse dress and eat rough food.”

Then he replied: “Woe be to you, I am not like you. Certainly, Alláh, the Sublime, has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of the poor, so that the poor do not cry over their poverty.”

From ancient days asceticism and the abandonment of worldly attachments has been regarded as a means of purification of the spirit and important for character building. Consequently, those who wished to lead a life of abstemiousness and meditation used to go out of the cities and towns to stay in forests and caves in the mountains and stay there concentrating on Alláh

according to their own conception. They would eat only if a casual traveller or the inhabitant of nearby dwellings gave them anything to eat, otherwise they remained contented with the fruits of wild trees and the water of the streams, and thus they passed their life.

This way of worship commenced in a way that was forced by the oppression and hardships of rulers. Certain people left their houses and, in order to avoid their grip, hid themselves in some wilderness or cave in a mountain, engaging themselves in worship of and devotion to Alláh. Later on, this forced asceticism acquired a voluntary form and people began to retire to caves and hollows of their own volition.

Thus it became an accepted way that whoever aimed at spiritual development retired to some corner after severing himself from all worldly ties. This method remained in vogue for centuries and even now some traces of this way of worship are found among the Buddhists and the Christians.

The moderate views of Islam do not, however, accord with the monastic life, because for attaining spiritual development it does not advocate the abandonment of worldly enjoyments and successes, nor does it view with approbation that a Muslim should leave his house and

fellow men and busy himself in formal worship, hiding in some corner.

The conception of worship in Islam is not confined to a few particular rites, but it regards the earning of one's livelihood through lawful means, mutual sympathy and good behaviour, and co-operation and assistance also to be important constituents of worship. If an individual ignores worldly rights and obligations and does not fulfil his responsibility towards his wife and children, nor occupies himself in efforts to earn a livelihood, but all the time stays in meditation, he ruins his life and does not fulfil the purpose of living.

If this were Alláh's aim, what would have the need for creating and populating the world when there was already a category of creatures who were all the time engaged in worshipping and adoration. Nature has made man to stand on the cross-roads at which the midway is the centre of guidance. If he deviates from this point of moderateness even a bit, this way or that way, there is sheer misguidance for him.

That midway is that he should neither bend towards this world to such an extent as to ignore the next life, devoting himself entirely to this one, nor should he abstain from this world so as not to have any connection

with anything of it, confining himself to some corner leaving everything else. Since Alláh has created man in this world he should follow the code of life for living in this world, and should partake of the comforts and pleasures bestowed by Alláh within moderate limits.

The eating and using of things made lawful by Alláh is not against Alláh's worship, but rather Alláh has created these things for the very purpose that they should be taken advantage of. That is why those who were the chosen of Alláh lived in this world with others and ate and drank like others. They did not feel the need to turn their faces away from the people of the world, and to adopt the wilderness or the caves of mountains as their abodes, or to live in distant spots. On the other hand they remembered Alláh, remained disentangled from worldly affairs, and did not forget death despite the pleasures and comforts of life.

The life of asceticism sometimes produces such evils as ruin the next life also as well as this one, and such an individual proves to be the true picture of "the looser in this life as well as the next." (Quran [22:11]) When natural impulses are not satisfied in the lawful and legal way the mind turns into a centre of evil-ideas and becomes incapable of performing worship with peace and concentration; and sometimes passions so overcome

the ascetic that breaking all moral fetters, the brain devotes itself completely to their satisfaction and consequently falls in an abyss of ruin for which it is impossible to extract oneself. That is why religious law accords a greater position to the worship performed by a married person than that by an unmarried person, because the former can exercise mental peace and concentration in the worship and rituals.

Individuals who put on the cloak of Sufism and make a loud show of their spiritual greatness are cut off from the path of Islam and are ignorant of its wide teachings. They have been misled by Satan and, relying on their self-formed conceptions, tread wrongful paths.

Eventually their misguidance becomes so serious that they begin to regard their leaders as having attained such a level that their word is as the word of Alláh and their act is as the act of Alláh. Sometimes they regard themselves beyond all the bounds and limitations of religious law and consider every evil act to be lawful for them.

This deviation from faith and irreligiousness is named Sufism (complete devotion to Alláh). Its unlawful principles are called “at-taríqah” (ways of achieving

communion with Alláh) and the followers of this cult are known as Sufis.

First of all Abú Háshim al-Kúfí and Shámí adopted this nickname. He was of Umayyad descent and afatalist (believing that man is bound to act as pre-ordained by Alláh). The reason for giving him this name was that, in order to make a show of his asceticism and fear for Alláh, he put on a woollen cloak. Later on this nickname became common and various grounds were put forth as the basis of this name.

For example, one ground is that ‘Sufi’ has three letters, “sád”, “wáw” and “fá”. “sád” stands for “sabr” (endurance), “sidq” (truthfulness) and “safá” (purity of heart); “wáw” stands for “wudd” (love), “wird” (repeating Alláh’s name) and “wafá” (faithfulness to Alláh), and “fá” stands for “fard” (unit), “faqr” (destitution) and “fana” (death or absorption in Alláh’s Self).

The second view is that it has been derived from “as-Suffah”, which was a platform near the Prophet’s mosque which had a covering of date-palm leaves. Those who stayed there were called Ashábu’ Suffah (people of the platform).

The third view is that the name of the progenitor of an Arab tribe was Súfah, and this tribe performed the duties of serving the pilgrims and the Ka`bah, and it is with reference to their connection with this tribe that these people were called Sufis.

This group is divided among various sects but the fundamental sects are seven only.

1) al-Wahdatiyyah (unitarian): This sect believes in the oneness of all existence. Its belief is that everything of this world is Alláh, so much so that they assign to even polluted things the same godly position.

They liken Alláh with the river and the waves rising in it, and argue that the waves, which sometimes rise and sometimes fall, have no separate existence other than the river, but their existence is exactly the existence of the river. Therefore, nothing can be separated from its own existence which is Allah.

2) al-Ittihádiyyah (the unitists): They believe that they have united with Alláh and Alláh has united with them. They liken Alláh with fire and themselves with iron that lies in the fire and acquires its form and properties.

3) al-hulúliyyah (the formists): Their belief is that Alláh takes the form of those who claim to know Him and the perfect ones, and their bodies are places of His stay. In this way, they are seemingly men but really Alláh.

4) al-Wásiliyyah (the combiners): This sect considers itself to have combined with Alláh. Their belief is that the laws of the shariàh are a means of development of human personality and character, and that when the human self combines with Alláh it no more needs perfection or development. Consequently, for the “wásilín”, worship and ritual become useless, because they hold that when truth and reality is achieved shariàh remains of no avail. Therefore, they can do anything and they cannot be questioned.

5) az-Zarráqiyyah (the revellers): This sect regards vocal and instrumental music as worship, and earns the pleasures of this world through a show of asceticism and begging from door to door. They are even engaged in relating concocted stories of miraculous performances of their leaders to over-awe the common people.

6) al-Ushsháqiyyah (the lovers): The theory of this sect is that apparency is the means to reality, meaning that carnal love is the means to achieve love of Alláh. That is, in order to reach the stage of Alláh’s love it is

necessary to have love with some human beauty. But the love which they regard as love for Alláh is just the product of mental disorder through which the lover inclines to one individual with all his attention and his final aim is to have access to the beloved. This love can lead to the way of evil and vice, but it has no connection with the love of Alláh.

A Persian couplet says:

عشق مجاز چون بحقیقت نظر کنی
دیو است و دیو را نبود پای رهبری

The truth of the fact is that carnal love is like a jinn and a jinn cannot give you guidance.

7) at-Talqíniyyah (the encounterers): According to this sect, the reading of religious texts and books of scholarship is thoroughly forbidden. Rather, the position that is achieved by an hour of spiritual effort of the Sufis cannot be achieved by seventy years of reading books.

According to Shíàh Ulamá' all these sects are on the wrong path and out of the fold of Islam. In this connection, numerous sayings of the Imáms are related. In this sermon also Amír al-mu'mínín (PBUH) has regarded the severance of `ÁSim ibn Ziyád from this

world as the mischief of Satan, and he dissuaded him from adopting that course.

Source: Commentary on Nahjol Balagha by Mufti Jafar Hussain, Sermon 208, translated into English from Urdu by: Syed Ali Reza, pages 446 – 449, footnote 133, Ansariyan Publications, Qom, 2003.

6. Ghufrān Ma'ab's opinions about Sufis – Prof. Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi

Introducing Sayyid Dildar Ali's critique of mysticism, al-shihab al-thaqib (الشهاب الثاقب), Dr. Athar Abbas Rizvi writes:

“Mawlānā Dildar Ali (1753 – 1820) toed the line of the Safawid Ulama in fiercely opposing sufism. Like them he considered it was a threat to Shi'ism. He wrote a detailed work entitled the Shihab al-Saqib refuting sufi doctrines and condemning the leading sufis.

The principal target of his attack is the Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Being) of ibn Arabi. The Mawlānā points out initially the differences between scholars, philosophers and sufis in their approach to Wujud (Being) and Wajib (Necessary Being). It goes on to explain in detail the sufi theory of the Wujud al-Mutlaq (the Absolute). The sufis believe that Necessary Being is the essence of the Absolute Being, the Mawlānā asserts, and that essence is found in all objects.

The Mawlānā summarises the sufi arguments on Wahdat al-Wujud and counters each of them. He also demolishes Haydar Amoli's proposition concerning it and condemns the views of Sharif Juzjani and Sadru'd-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra).

To the Mawlānā, the self-delimitation theory of the Absolute is misleading. He quotes the Qur'anic verses which, according to the sufis, endorse the Wahdat al-Wujud belief and marshalls arguments showing that the sufi interpretations have no relevance to the real meaning of the verses. The Mawlānā gives verses and ahādīs which contradict the sufi views of the Wahdat al-Wujud.

The book also shows that the best description of God and His Attributes is available only in the sayings of the Imams of the Prophet's family. According to them, God is omnipresent by His own essence and He demonstrates His essence by His essence and not through worldly objects.

A chapter of the work deals with the definition of kashf (sufi revelations) and asserts that knowledge obtained through this process was not necessarily correct. Kashf did not discriminate between truth and falsehood and so could not be made the basis for a final decision. If it could, the past-masters of kashf would have been infallible. A section of the chapter points out the faults of eminent sufis starting with ibn Arabi (1165 – 1240). It quotes the correspondence between ibn Arabi's supporter, Abdur-Razzaq Kashi, and ibn Arabi's opponent, Ala'ud- Dawla Simnani, and refutes the

statements made by his followers, including those of Haydar Amoli (1319 – 1385).

The mystic Hasan Basri (641 – 728) is accused of introducing anti-Islamic monastic practices into the faith. According to the Mawlana, the Imamiyya works did not justify Sayyid Haydar Amoli's statement that Hasan Basri was one of Imam Ali's most eminent disciples.

Section three of the same chapter accuses Sufyan Sawri of hostility to Ahl-i bayt and blames him for disseminating many baseless ahadis. The famous utterances of Abū Yazid Bistāmi (d. 874 or 877) such as "Glory be to me. How great is my Majesty" (سبحانی ما اعظم شانی) are condemned as heretical by the Mawlānā and Abū Yazid is described as a propagator of theories supporting hulul (infusion of God into a creature) and ittihad (unification of the Divine and human nature).

He quotes Sayyid Murtaza ar-Razi who, comparing Abdullah ibn Saba with Abū Yazid, wrote that it was surprising that the Sunnis condemned Abdullah ibn Saba because he attributed Divine attributes to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, but raised no objections against Abū Yazid who thought himself superior to God. Referring to Abū Yazid's services to Imām Ja'far as- Sadiq, the

Mawlānā says that these did not reduce the weight of his sins.

He reiterates that the respect shown by authors such as Qazi Nūru‘llah Shustari (1549 – 1610) and Bahā’u’d-Din ‘Amili (1547 – 1621) to some sufis did not indicate that they supported the Wahdat al-Wajid doctrines. The section on Abū Yazid also condemns Mansur al-Hallāj (killed 922).

There is another section devoted solely to Mansur in which he is castigated as a zindig (believer in a Magi sect), an heretic and an infidel.

In the section dealing with Ghazali (d. 1111), the author states that he was a bigoted Sunni whose life-mission was to strengthen enmity towards Ahl-i bayt. The Mawlānā remarks that Ghazali’s defence of Yazid was preposterous and showed that he had no respect for Imam Husayn. His assertion that the Shi’i faith was false was based merely on personal kashf and flimsy arguments.

Shaykh Abdu’l-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166) hated the Shi’is even more deeply than his predecessors, claims the Mawlānā. The Shaykh fervently believed that the tenth of Muharram was not a day of mourning but of rejoicing, for, before the advent of Islam, it had proved

an auspicious day for some of the early prophets. According to Shaykh Abdu'l-Qadir, A'isha was superior to all other women and the Shi'i beliefs resembled those of the Jews.

In the section on Rumi, the Mawlānā quotes verses from his Masnawi to show that Rumi did not discriminate between Islam and infidelity and that his similes and metaphors were sacrilegious. The Mawlana continues that the poetry of 'Attar, Sanā'i and other sufi poets was heretical and irreligious.

The last but one chapter condemns the mystical practices of sufis and accuses them of violating the basic principles of Islamic teachings. The sufi meditational postures, music, ascetic exercises and love affairs with young boys are, according to the Mawlānā, unlawful. He claims that their practices of wearing woollen garments and loud and silent zikr, the system of bay'a and the presentation of khirqa (sufi robes) are acts of perversion and apostasy.

The last chapter deals with various sufi orders which, in the Mawlānā's opinion, are totally profane, blasphemous and inculcate materialism and licentiousness." (1)

Brief biography of Ghufuran Ma'ab

Sayyid Dildar Ali Naqvi Naseerabadi, also known as Ghufuran-Ma'ab, (1753 – 1820) was a Shia theologian and jurist of India. Born in the village of Nasirabad, Raebareli, India, he got his early education in his home town. He received his higher education from Sayyid Ghulam Husayn Dakhini Ilahabadi, Mawlawi Haydar Ali Sandilawi and Mawlawi Babu'llah of Raebareli. Most of his teachers in India were Maturidiyya Hanafis. He studied astronomy under a renowned scholar of that time, Allama Tafazzul Hussain Khan Kashmiri. (2)

Like other Shia intellectuals of the time, Mawlānā Dildar Ali became an akhbari and a rationalist as he greatly admired the Fawaid-i Madaniyyaz by Mulla Muhammad Amin Astarabadi which endorsed this stance. In 1779, Mawlānā Dildar 'Ali, financed by Mirzā Hasan Rizā Khān, left for further studies in Iraq and Iran.

The Mawlānā was unable to accept the usuli theory of ijma' (consensus). He supported the akhbārī position that it was meaningless to consider religious questions finally decided on the basis of ijma' or a unanimous decision by a number of qualified scholars. The akhbari

belief that such questions could never be finally settled appeared true to him.

At Najaf he called initially on Sayyid Muhsin Baghdadi and told him that the book *Fawa'id-i Madaniyya* had converted the Indian Shi'a intellectuals to the akhbari point of view and even he himself was confused. Sayyid Muhsin replied that ignorance of the usul theories was responsible for the popularity of the akhbāri traditions. The Sayyid then gave him the *Fawa'id al-Makkiyya* by Nūru'd-Din 'Ali bin Husayn (d. 1658).

Mawlānā Dildar Ali then called on Shaykh Ja'far Najafi, the author of *Kashful-ghita*. They too discussed the problem of *ijma'* but the Mawlānā's doubts and anxieties remained unresolved. From Najaf the Mawlānā moved to Karbalā. There he studied under Bāqir Bihbahāni, the author of the commentary on the *Istibsār* and under Sayyid 'Ali Tabātabā'i. The libraries in Karbalā contained a large number of usuli and akhbāri works and this prompted the Mawlānā to study the problem thoroughly. His intensive reading convinced him that Mulla Muhammad Mu'in Astarābādi, the author of *Fawa'id-i Madaniyya*, had condemned the mujtahids unjustly. His mental satisfaction made his studies meaningful.

At Karbalā he was also one of Sayyid Mahdi Shahrastāni's students. At Najaf his teacher was Bahru'l-'Ulūm Aqā Sayyid Muhammad bin Murtazā bin Muhammad al-Hasani al-Husayni, known as Mahdi Tabātabā'i Burūjardi. Later on he visited Mashhad and studied under Sayyid Mahdi bin Sayyid Hidayatullah Isfahāni. From Mashhad he returned home with certificates of ijtiḥād.

Back in Lucknow, the first Friday congregational prayer was organised by the prime minister Hasan Riza Khan in his own palace on Friday, 12 May 1785. This was the anniversary of Imām 'Alī's birthday. On 27 Rajab, the anniversary of Prophet Muhammad's call to the Prophethood, the Friday congregational prayers were held in public. The Mawlānā led the prayers and gave a sermon on historical, ethical and religious topics.

Mawlānā Dildar 'Alī's sermons and teachings raised the deteriorating ethical standards of the Shi'a aristocracy in Awadh. He strengthened the Shi'a intellectual traditions and stimulated the production of scholarly religious works. The Mawlānā's own writings can be divided into six categories:

1. Books relating to the refutation of the akhbāris;

2. Works discussing the basic principles of the Shi'a faith and jurisprudence;
3. Books relating to the history of the Imāms and the promotion of the mourning ceremonies of Muharram;
4. Glosses and commentaries on classical text books;
5. Anti-Sufi literature;
6. A refutation of the Sunni condemnations of the Shi'as aroused by the Tuhfa-i Isna Ashariyya by Shah Abdu'l-Aziz Dehlavi.

At his suggestion Nawab Asafu'd-Dawla built a canal in Karbala and financed the rebuilding of the Imams' tomb there. The Nawab and his successors also sent liberal gifts to the seminaries, students and deserving people at Karbala, Najaf and other holy Shi'a centres in Iraq.

Mawlānā Dildar Ali's sons and disciples were also pious, dedicated scholars and teachers. The Shi'as considered them the undisputed leaders of the community.

On 8 March 1820, Mawlānā Dildar Ali made his eldest son his successor. The Mawlānā died in the night of 2 May 1820. His body was buried in his Imambara at Lucknow. He was given the title Ghufuran Ma'ab (he

who has taken refuge in Divine forgiveness) to show respect to his memory. (3)

References:

1. Rizvi, “A Socio-Intellectual History of Isna Ashari Shi’is in India”, Vol. 2, pp. 133 – 135, Ma’rifat Publishing House, Canberra, Australia (1986).
2. Rizvi, “A Socio-Intellectual History of Isna Ashari Shi’is in India”, Vol. 2, p. 228, Ma’rifat Publishing House, Canberra, Australia (1986).
3. Rizvi, “A Socio-Intellectual History of Isna Ashari Shi’is in India”, Vol. 2, pp. 128 – 139, Ma’rifat Publishing House, Canberra, Australia (1986).

Articles

1. Mulla Sadra on love for adolescent boys

Prior to the emergence of Islam, a vibrant maritime trade existed between Indus Valley and Alexandria, where Plotinus (d. 270 CE) skillfully merged the ideas of the Upanishads with Plato's philosophy, hence foundation of Neoplatonism was laid. (1) Philosophers of Mecca, like Amr ibn Hisham (d. 624 CE) the Abu Jahl, who held that something that has ceased to exist cannot come back itself and that the idols were manifestations of the One, were influenced by the prevailing neoplatonism of Levant and North Africa.

Few centuries later, in the Abbasid period, Indian and Greek mythologies were translated into Arabic and the realm of mysticism or Sufism began to thrive among Muslims. In the post-Abbasid period, Ibn Arabi (d. 1240 CE), revived mysticism and the number of saints greatly grew after him. They were funded by local rulers who trusted their supermatural claims and hoped to use their spiritual powers against political foes. The mystics lived a life of abstinence in places called "Khanqah" and trained their disciples in the those buildings who were young boys.

Sexual exploitation of young boys was prevalent during that time. The medieval Syrian historian Ibn Kathir al-Damishqi (d. 1373 CE) writes:

وهي فاحشة اللواط، التي قد ابتلي بها غالب الملوك والأمراء، والتجار والعوام، والكتاب والفقهاء، والقضاة ونحوهم، إلا من عصم الله منهم.

“Sodomy is rampant among rulers, officials, businessmen, commoners, scribes, jurists, judges, and various others, apart from those whom Allah bestows with special mercy.” [2]

Due to the fact that they could only associate with people of the same sex, this behavior also developed among the mystics. Rumi (d. 1273 CE) says:

صوفئى گشته به پیش این لنام
الخیاطة و اللواط و السلام

“To these vile sufis, mysticism is nothing but to don a ‘khirqah’ (woolen robe) and engage in sodomy.” (3)

Mulla Sadra’s Lolita

Mulla Sadra (d. 1640 CE) in his magnum opus, “Asfar-e-Arba’a”, has a chapter titled “love of elegant persons for young and beautiful boys” (في ذكر عشق الظرفاء والفتيان) (للأوجه الحسان) that goes into great detail about the homosexual passion. (4)

He writes:

اعلم أنه اختلف آراء الحكماء في هذا العشق وماهيته وانه حسن أو قبيح محمود أو مذموم فمنهم من ذمه وذكر انه رذيلة وذكر مساويه وقال إنه من فعل البطالين والمعتلين ومنهم من قال إنه فضيلة نفسانية ومدحه وذكر محاسن أهله وشرف غايته ومنهم من لم يقف على ماهيته وعلله وأسباب معانيه وغايته ومنهم من زعم أنه مرض نفسي ومنهم من قال إنه جنون الهي.

Translation: “Know that different sages have said different things about this sort of love and about its nature. Some people think it’s commendable, some think it’s dreadful, some laud it in kind terms, some think it’s a detestable deed and think it is held by worthless people, while some believe it’s a spiritual virtue, applaud who indulge in it, and affirm their good intentions. Some refer to it as a psychological ailment while others refer to it as a spiritual obsession since they are unaware of its nature or causes.”

والذي يدل عليه النظر الدقيق والمنهج الأنيق وملاحظة الأمور عن أسبابها الكلية ومبادئها العالية وغاياتها الحكيمة ان هذا العشق أعني الالتذاذ الشديد بحسن الصورة الجميلة والمحبة المفرطة لمن وجد فيه الشمائل اللطيفة وتناسب الأعضاء وجوده التركيب لما كان موجودا على نحو وجود الأمور الطبيعية في نفوس أكثر الأمم من غير تكلف وتصنع فهو لا محاله من جملة الأوضاع الإلهية التي يترتب عليها المصالح والحكم فلا بد ان يكون مستحسنا محمودا سيما وقد وقع من مباد فاضله لأجل غايات شريفة.

Translation: “And through profound analysis, sophisticated contemplation, and the exploration of underlying principles and intelligent purposes, it is widely acknowledged that this love encompasses the immense pleasure derived from admiring the beauty of an enchanting visage. This variant of affection transcends all boundaries, capturing the heart with exquisite allure, captivating physique, and enticing coquetry. Historically, it was a natural inclination prevalent among the majority of nations. Undoubtedly, profound wisdom and expediency reside within the realm of spiritual magnificence regarding this matter, as it serves noble objectives, rendering it both desirable and advantageous.”

اما المبادي فلانا نجد أكثر نفوس الأمم التي لها تعليم العلوم والصنائع اللطيفة والآداب والرياضيات مثل أهل الفارس وأهل العراق وأهل الشام والروم وكل قوم فيهم العلوم الدقيقة والصنائع اللطيفة والآداب الحسنة غير خاليه عن هذا العشق اللطيف الذي منشأه استحسان شمائل المحبوب ونحن لم نجد أحدا ممن له قلب لطيف وطبع دقيق وذهن صاف ونفس رحيمة خاليا عن هذه المحبة في أوقات عمره.

Translation: “The essence of the matter lies in the observation of this phenomenon among nations that possess a rich array of sciences, arts, literature, and mathematical education, such as Persia, Iraq, Syria, and Rome. Moreover, any nation that exhibits a meticulous

dedication to scholarly pursuits, precision in craftsmanship, and an embrace of civilized life is not bereft of this refined love, which serves as an homage to the merits of the beloved. In all our life experiences, we have encountered no individual with a tender heart, a compassionate nature, pure thoughts, and a benevolent spirit who is devoid of this affectionate sentiment.”

ولكن وجدنا سائر النفوس الغليظة والقلوب القاسية والطبائع الجافية من الأكراد والاعراب والترك والزنج خالية عن هذا النوع من المحبة وانما اقتصر أكثرهم على محبة الرجال للنساء ومحبة النساء للرجال طلبا للنكاح والسفاد كما في طباع سائر الحيوانات المرتكزة فيها حب الازدواج والسفاد والغرض منها في الطبيعة ابقاء النسل وحفظ الصور في هيوليائها بالجنس والنوع إذ كانت الاشخاص دائمة السيلان والاستحالة.

Translation: “However, we discovered that impure, cruel, and arid people such as the Kurds, Bedouins, Turks, and Africans were bereft of this form of love. Instead, it is observed that among these communities, the predominant focus of affection lies in the bonds between men and women. Similar to other living beings, they believe that human beings possess a natural inclination towards procreation and fulfilling their wicked desires. They reckon, that nature’s primary objective is the continuation of the human race and the perpetuation of various hylomorphs. Therefore,

gonorrhea and impotence are common within these communities.”

وأما الغاية في هذا العشق الموجود في الطرفاء وذوي لطافة الطبع فلما ترتب عليه من تأديب الغلمان وتربيته الصبيان وتهذيبهم وتعليمهم العلوم الجزئية كالنحو واللغة والبيان والهندسة وغيرها والصنائع الدقيقة والآداب الحميدة والأشعار اللطيفة الموزونة والنغمات الطيبة وتعليمهم القصص والأخبار والحكايات الغريبة والأحاديث المروية إلى غير ذلك من الكمالات النفسانية.

Translation: “The existence of this love among refined and elegant individuals serves the purpose of guiding and refining young boys, fostering their education, cultivating a sense of civility, and imparting essential skills encompassing grammar, vocabulary, storytelling, and mathematics. It aims to revive cherished customs, inspire the creation of appropriate and eloquent poems, and elevate the spirit through the recitation of tales, historical accounts, profound pearls of wisdom, and sacred hadiths.”

فإن الأطفال والصبيان إذا استغنوا عن تربيته الآباء والأمهات فهم بعد محتاجون إلى تعليم الاستاديين والمعلمين وحسن توجيههم والتفانيهم إليهم بنظر الإشفاق والتعطف فمن أحل ذلك أوجدت العناية الربانية في نفوس الرجال البالغين رغبة في الصبيان وتعشقا ومحبة للغلمان الحسان الوجوه ليكون ذلك داعيا لهم إلى تأديبهم وتهذيبهم وتكميل نفوسهم الناقصة وتبليغهم إلى الغايات المقصودة في إيجاد نفوسهم والا لما خلق الله هذه

الرغبة والمحبة في أكثر الظرفاء والعلماء عبثا وهباء فلا بد في ارتكاز هذا العشق النفساني في النفوس اللطيفة والقلوب الرقيقة غير القاسية ولا الجافية من فائدة حكيمية وغاية صحيحة.

Translation: “As children and young boys complete their upbringing under the guidance of their parents, it becomes crucial for them to receive education from teachers and mentors. They require the attention, love, compassionate gaze, and affection of these educators, making this love a justifiable need. The allure of young boys in the hearts of older men and the fondness for the beauty of fresh youth is a divine gift, facilitating teachers in imparting literature, nurturing their developing spirits towards perfection, instilling noble life goals, and enabling self-realization. This inclination to guide and inspire is inherent, for God would not have instilled such love in the hearts of scholars and intelligent individuals without reason. The fact that this affection is found in sensitive souls and tender hearts, rather than in those who are cold-hearted and devoid of emotion, serves as evidence of its inherent benefits, wisdom, and righteous purpose.” (4)

It is not surprising that mystics such as Mulla Sadra who regard their feelings as sacred truths (al-ilm al-huduri al-ishraqi) make up theories about their sexual fantasies. But in today’s age, if a teacher is engaged in this sort of

love with his student, he should be fired immediately. A teacher who prioritizes physical attractions and body, instead of focusing on the mind of a pupil, undermines education. They must never exploit their position of power to engage in illicit behavior with vulnerable children.

References:

1. A. H. Armstrong, “Plotinus and India”, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (1), pp. 22-28, Cambridge University Press, 1936.
2. Ibn Kathir, “al-bidaya wal-nihaya”, vol. 9, page 114, Dar al-Kutub al-‘ilmiya, Lebanon.
3. Rumi, “masnavi-i ma’navi”, book 5, verse 364.
4. Mulla Sadra, “al-hikma al-muta’aliya fil-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba’a”, vol. 7, pages 171 – 174, dar ihya’ al-turath al-‘arabi, Beirut, 1981.

2. Mulla Sadra and dehumanisation of women

Romantic attraction to people of one's own sex is often accompanied by aversion to the opposite sex. Mulla Sadra (d. 1641) goes to great lengths to justify love for young adolescent boys. His book "Asfar-e-Arbaa" is his major contribution to Neoplatonism, and it is a cumbersome reading full of repetitions, misinformed speculations, faulty generalizations and illogical constructions. Modern edition, published by Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi from Beirut, spreads over three and a half thousand pages. In this book, he has portrayed women negatively.

One explicit example of these negative depictions is found in the seventh volume. On page 134, a new chapter begins entitled: "The Purpose of Earth's Creation and its Inhabitants for the Benefit of Humans" (في عنايته تعالى في خلق الأرض وما عليها لينتفع بها الإنسان). In this chapter, Mulla Sadra says that the sole purpose of creation of animals and other creatures, including women, is to serve man. He writes:

و منها تولد الحيوانات المختلفة؛ وَ بَتَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ بَعْضُهَا لِلأَكْلِ وَ الْأَنْعَامِ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَ مَنَافِعُ وَ مِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَ بَعْضُهَا لِلرَّكُوبِ وَ الزِينَةِ وَ الْحَيْلِ وَ الْبِغَالِ وَ الْحَمِيرِ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَ زِينَةً وَ بَعْضُهَا لِلْحَمْلِ وَ تَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَى بَلَدٍ لَمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغِيَةِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ وَ بَعْضُهَا لِلتَّجْمَلِ وَ الرَّاحَةِ وَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَ حِينَ

تَسْرَحُونَ و بعضها للنكاح و الله جعل لكم من أنفسكم أزواجا و بعضها للملابس و البيت و الأثاث و جعل لكم من جلود الأنعام بيوتا تستخفونها يوم ظعنكم و يوم إقامتكم- و من أصوافها و أوبارها و أشعارها أثاثا و متاعا إلى حين(1) .

Translation: “Animals are one of the blessings of God, ‘the scattering of all kinds of creatures throughout, the shifting of the winds, and the clouds drifting between the heavens and the earth—in all of this are surely signs for people of understanding’ [2: 164]. Some are to be consumed, ‘and the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and benefits, and from them you eat’ [16: 5]. Some are created for transportation, ‘and the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and (as) adornment. And He creates that which you do not know’ [16: 8]. Some work as a carrier, ‘and they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful’ [16: 7]. Some are for comfort and beauty, ‘and for you in them is (the enjoyment of) beauty when you bring them in (for the evening) and when you send them out (to pasture)’ [16: 6]. Some are for sexual intercourse, ‘and Allah has made for you from yourselves mates’ [16: 72]. Some are used to make household crafts and clothes, ‘and Allah has made for you from your homes a place of rest and made for you from the hides of the

animals tents which you find light on your day of travel and your day of encampment; and from their wool, fur and hair is furnishing and enjoyment for a time' [16: 80].”

Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the marriage verse in the context of animal references is a huge misinterpretation. Another mystic writer and poet, Mulla Hadi Sabzavari (d. 1873 CE), writes in his commentary on the text:

فى إدراجها فى سلك الحيوانات إيماء لطيف إلى أن النساء لضعف عقولهن و جمودهن على إدراك الجزئيات و رغبتهن إلى زخارف الدنيا كدن أن يلتحقن بالحيوانات الصامتة حقا و صدقا أغلبهن سيرتهن الدواب و لكن كسأهن صورة الإنسان لئلا يشمئز عن صحبتهن و يرغب فى نكاحهن(1) .

Translation: “His consideration of women as animals is a subtle mystical argument that suggests that due to their lack of intelligence and their inability to go from particulars to universals and their interest in worldly adornments, women are essentially irrational animals. The majority of them live like tetrapods (four-footed animals), but they were made to look like humans so that men would be attracted to them and not feel repulsed by them during intimacy.”

On page 172 of the same volume, Mulla Sadra presents his theory of love for young boys while portraying love

for women as characteristic of inferior nations. (2) These passages not only demonstrate Mulla Sadra's aversion to women but also reveal elements of racism within his writings.

It is crucial to critically analyze and contextualize such passages from historical works, recognizing that they may reflect the prevalent attitudes and beliefs of the time. It is also essential to acknowledge the progress society has made in challenging and rejecting such discriminatory views. Mulla Sadra's Indian contemporary, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), a Sufi saint revered by Taliban, has also dehumanized women. In his views, women are more prone to blameworthy actions than men. (3) He sees women as a source of pleasure for men only. In one of his letters, he says:

لباس ابریشم بر زنان مباح فرمود که منافع آن نیز عائد بمردان است و همچنین است حال ذهب و فضه که حلی زنان از برای تمتع مردان است. (4)

Translation: "God has made silk clothing permissible for women because the benefit of women's adornment is ultimately for men. And such is the state of silver and gold that was allowed for women's ornament, so that men could rejoice."

References:

1. Mulla Sadra, “al-hikma al-muta’aliya fil-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba’a”, vol. 7, pages 136, dar ihya’ al-turath al-‘arabi, Beirut, 1981.
2. Mulla Sadra, “al-hikma al-muta’aliya fil-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba’a”, vol. 7, pages 172, dar ihya’ al-turath al-‘arabi, Beirut, 1981.
3. Tahera Aftab, “Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God”, chapter 4, pages: 104–135, brill, 2022.
4. Ahmad Sirhindi, “maktubat-i imam-i rabbani”, volume 1, letter 191, page 191, Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, Kanpur.

3. Misconceptions of Medieval Muslim Philosophers about the Solar System

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE)

Dr. Herbert A. Davidson writes:

“The universe envisioned by al-Farabi is fashioned of Aristotelian bricks and of mortar borrowed from Neoplatonic philosophy. Aristotle, who of course had no notion of centripetal or centrifugal force, had pictured a universe in which the heavenly bodies are continually borne around a stationary earth by rotating spheres. And he had concluded that the unceasing movements of the celestial spheres must depend on an inexhaustible source of power, and hence upon an incorporeal mover, that in fact each distinct circular movement distinguishable or inferable in the heavens must be due to a distinct sphere with its own incorporeal mover.

As al-Farabi and Avicenna were to understand Aristotle, each celestial sphere also has a rational soul, and the continual motion proper to each sphere is an expression of the desire that the sphere’s soul has to emulate the perfection of the incorporeal mover. The incorporeal mover was thus deemed the mover of the sphere in the sense that it maintains the sphere in motion as an object

of desire. Since the movements of all the heavenly bodies indicated a total of fifty-five primary and subordinate spheres, Aristotle wrote that the total number of incorporeal movers is ‘in all probability also fifty-five.’

The version of the scheme presupposed by al-Farabi gave its attention to the primary celestial spheres and ignored the subordinate spheres — in late Greek and medieval astronomy, although not yet in Aristotle, these were epicyclical or eccentric spheres — that had to be posited in order to explain the full complexity of celestial motion. Al-Farabi assumed nine primary spheres and nine incorporeal movers, or intelligences, as they are called in the Middle Ages, which govern them. A slightly different reduction is known from Alexander.

The nine main spheres are: an outer, diurnal sphere, which rotates around the earth once every twenty-four hours and imparts its daily motion to the spheres nested inside it — an inversion of what modern astronomy sees as the rotation of the earth on its axis; the sphere of the fixed stars, which is carried around the earth once every twenty-four hours by the diurnal sphere and in addition performs its own infinitesimal rotation, a rotation giving rise to the phenomenon that astronomers call the precession of the equinoxes; and the seven spheres

carrying the five planets known at the time as well as the sun and the moon. Each of the seven inner spheres participates in the daily motion imparted by the diurnal sphere and in addition performs a rotation peculiar to itself, thereby giving rise to the apparent periodic movements of the sun, moon, and planets around the earth.

Within the translunar region, Aristotle recognized no causal relationship in what we may call the vertical plane; he did not recognize a causality that runs down through the series of incorporeal movers. And in the horizontal plane, that is, from each intelligence to the corresponding sphere, he recognized causality only in respect to motion, not in respect to existence.

As the Aristotelian scheme of the universe reappears in al-Farabi, the causal connections not acknowledged by Aristotle are added through a succession of Neoplatonic emanations. An incorporeal First Cause, the deity, stands at the head of the universe and above the movers of the spheres. From the First Cause, a first incorporeal intelligence emanates eternally. The first intelligence has two thoughts, a thought of the First Cause and a thought of its own essence. By virtue of the former thought, the existence of a second intelligence proceeds necessarily, and by virtue of the latter, the existence of

the first sphere proceeds necessarily. The second intelligence similarly has a thought of the First Cause of the universe and of its own essence. It thereby eternally brings forth the existence of the third intelligence and of the second sphere, and the process continues down to the ninth intelligence, from which emanates the ninth sphere, the sphere of the moon.

The Neoplatonic inspiration goes beyond causality through emanation. Plotinus' single, grand emanation scheme of (a) the One, (b) Intellect (nous), (c) Soul, (d) material universe is replicated on a smaller scale at every stage of the process. For (a) the deity, called by al-Farabi 'the First', eternally emanates (b1) the first intelligence (aql = nous) and the latter in turn eternally emanates (c1) what al-Farabi calls both the 'soul', and the 'intellect', of the first sphere, and also (d1) the body of the first sphere. The first intelligence initiates a similar subseries by eternally emanating (b2) the second intelligence, which emanates (c2) the soul and (d2) the body of the second sphere. And so forth.

(Footnote: Avicenna will distinguish three separate aspects in the thought of each intelligence, in order to explain the intelligence's emanation of three things—the soul and body of the corresponding sphere and the

next intelligence in the series. Al-Farabi does not yet have that point.)” [1]

Avicenna (d. 1037 CE)

Dr. Herbert A. Davidson writes:

“Like al-Farabi, Avicenna envisions a translunar region comprising nine primary spheres: an outermost, diurnal sphere, the sphere of the fixed stars, and the seven spheres that contain the planets, the sun, and the moon.

(Footnote: Avicenna recognizes secondary spheres and does not reject out of hand the possibility that each secondary sphere has its own intelligence. On such a hypothesis, ‘the first teacher’s [Aristotle’s] position’ that there are ‘approximately fifty’ intelligences may be correct. But, Avicenna adds, the active intellect will in any event be ‘the last’ in the series.)

Each sphere is again accompanied by an incorporeal intelligence, which is its mover, and Avicenna again knits intelligences and spheres together through a series of emanations. He, however, offers his version of the emanation scheme as an explicit solution to a philosophic problem, and his version includes a nuance not found in al-Farabi. The philosophic problem is encapsulated in the terse formula that ‘from the one,

insofar as it is one, only one can come into existence .’
«لا يوجد عن الواحد إلا واحد»

(Footnote: The problem of explaining how a plural universe can derive from a wholly unitary first cause was posed by Plotinus and reappears in one of the Arabic paraphrases of Plotinus. But I have not been able to find the formula that “from one only one proceeds” before Avicenna. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.6, 5.2.1, 5.3.15.)

In Avicenna, the scheme of successive emanations is expressly designed to explain how, given that principle, a plural universe can derive from the wholly unitary First Cause: Plurality enters because the incorporeal beings subsequent to the First Cause have plural thoughts.

Avicenna still locates the ultimate, First Cause of the universe beyond the intelligences that move the celestial spheres. And the First Cause, through its eternal thought of itself, still eternally and continually emanates the first intelligence, which is the mover of the outermost sphere. Al-Farabi had differentiated between two aspects in the thought of each incorporeal intelligence, and each intelligence, in his scheme, eternally emanates the next intelligence in the series by virtue of one of the two

aspects, while by virtue of the other it emanates a celestial sphere.

(Footnote: Al-Farabi does write that the soul of each of the spheres has three objects of thought: itself, the incorporeal intelligence that is its cause, and the First Cause.)

Avicenna brings to bear a proposition from his metaphysics to the effect that the incorporeal intelligences are possibly existent by reason of themselves, necessarily existent by reason of their cause.

The distinction allows him to differentiate between three, and not just two, aspects in the thought of each intelligence; and the addition of the third aspect enables him to account for the presence of both a soul and a body in the celestial sphere emanated by the intelligence.

The first intelligence, in Avicenna's scheme, has the First Cause as the object of its thought, and a second intelligence thereby 'necessarily proceeds from it.' It has itself, insofar as it is a being existing necessarily by reason of the First Cause, as a second object of thought, and it thereby emanates the soul of the outermost sphere. And it has itself insofar as it is possibly existent by reason of itself as a third object of thought, and it thereby

emanates the body of the outermost sphere. Or, in a more careful formulation, it has a thought of itself which includes both its being necessarily existent by reason of the First Cause and its being possibly existent by reason of itself, and it thereby emanates the outermost sphere, which is composed of both a soul and a body.

The second intelligence similarly has as objects of its thought: the First Cause, itself as a being necessarily existent by reason of its cause, and itself as a possible being. Through those three thoughts, or aspects of its thought, it emanates the third intelligence, the body of the second sphere, which is the sphere of the fixed stars, and the soul of the second sphere. And so on.

(Footnote: The Isharat distinguishes two aspects in the thought of the intelligence, its thought of the First Cause and its thought of itself, and then adds that the second thought is divided in two. Ghazali distinguishes only two aspects in each intelligence.)

The final link in the chain of incorporeal intelligences is the ‘active intellect governing our souls’, that is to say, the active intellect implied in Aristotle’s *De anima*.

Avicenna feels called on to explain why the process stops at the active intellect and does ‘not continue . . . ad infinitum.’ He writes: While it is true that the ‘necessary

proceeding . . . of a multiplicity [of beings] from an [incorporeal] intelligence' implies a multiplicity of aspects in the emanating intelligence, the proposition is 'not convertible' and not all intelligences containing the same kind of aspects will bring forth the same kind of effects.

What an intelligence emanates depends on its nature and power. As intelligences succeed one another, their power diminishes, and because the active intellect stands low in the hierarchy its power is no longer sufficient to emanate eternal beings like those emanated by the intelligences above it.

Avicenna nevertheless ascribes to the active intellect a set of functions that lend his scheme a symmetry missing in al-Farabi. While the active intellect cannot fully imitate the intelligences above it and eternally emanate the body of a celestial sphere, the soul of a celestial sphere, and an additional incorporeal intelligence, it does emanate lesser analogues.

The active intellect is (1) the emanating cause of the matter of the sublunar world, (2) the emanating cause of natural forms appearing in matter, including the souls of plants, animals, and man, and (3) the cause of the actualization of the human intellect. Even these lesser

analogues are not the work of the active intellect alone, for in each instance an auxiliary factor participates.” [2]

Mulla Sadra (d. 1641 CE)

While in Europe, Copernicus (d. 1543 CE) had revolutionized astronomy by proposing a heliocentric model a century before Mulla Sadra, he had no knowledge of this development and he still believed in a stationary earth model, and associated rational minds with planets, which are nothing but rocks and gases as proven by his contemporary Galileo Galilei (d. 1642 CE). Mulla Sadra had no idea about gravity or its relation to spacetime either. He says:

«أن محرك السماء لا يجوز أن يكون عقلا محضا لا تقبل التغير كما لا يجوز أن يكون طبعا محضا لأن الثابت على حالة واحدة لا يصدر منه إلا ثابت على حالة واحدة فيجوز مثلا أن يكون سكون الأرض مثلا عن علة ثابتة لأنه دائمة على حالة واحدة [3].»

Translation: “The mover of the heavens cannot be a pure intellect that does not accept change, just as it cannot be purely material, because something that is constant in one state only emanates something that is constant in its state. For example, it is possible that Earth is stationary because of a static cause, because it always remains still, in one state.”

Ironically, Mulla Sadra is very rude and arrogant towards the theologians of his time who disagreed with him on the question of bodily resurrection. He ridicules them ad hominem for not knowing enough physics and mathematics. He says:

«وهم بالحقيقة أهل البدع والضلال. و قدوة الجهلة و الأردال شرهم كلهم على أهل الدين و الورع و ضرهم على العلماء. و أشدهم عداوة للذين آمنوا من الحكماء و الربانيين هذه الطائفة المجادلة المخاصمة. الذين يخوضون في المعقولات و هم لا يعرفون المحسوسات و يتعاطون البراهين و القياسات و هم لا يحسنون الرياضيات و يتكلمون في الإلهيات و هم يجهلون الطبيعيات» [4].

Translation: “Indeed, these people are heretics and perverse, the leaders of the ignorant and the vile. All their wickedness is reserved only for the people of religion and piety and their hostility is directed at the scholars only, and their fiercest enmity is against the believers among the sages and the divine saints.

This polemicist and the litigant group delve into the intelligible while they do not know the nature of physical things. They want to practise reasoning and inference even though they haven’t learned mathematics yet. They like to discuss theology while they are ignorant of physics.”

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4. Allama Tafazzul Hussain Khan Kashmiri's attempt to revive science in muslim societies

Allama Tafazzul Hussain Khan Kashmiri (1727 – 1801), also known as Khan-e-Allama, was a Twelver Shia scholar, scientist, and theologian of North India. He is famous for his Arabic translation of Sir Isaac Newton's Principia.

Early Life and Education

Allama Tafazzul Husain Kashmiri was born to an influential Kashmiri family in Sialkot in 1727. His grandfather, Karamullah, was a great scholar of his time and served as a minister under Mir Mannu, governor of Lahore. At the age of 13, his father moved to Delhi, where he studied basic logic and philosophy under Mulla Wajih, a student of the eminent Sunni scholar Mulla Nizam-ud-Din. He learned Mathematics from Mirza Muhammad Ali. At the age of 18, his family moved to Lucknow where he joined the seminary of Firangi Mahal. Soon he developed doubts about the teachings of Sunni Islam and mystical philosophy and moved out of the seminary, and started to research on his own. He then converted to Shia Islam. [1] At that time mysticism was rampant and pseudo-scientific ideas of Mulla Sadra were taught in Firangi Mahal. [2] The venom of tassawuf had killed the spirit of scientific

inquiry in Muslim society. In such an environment, Allama Tafazzul set out to learn and translate state of the art books of science and modern astronomy. Historian of science, Simon Schaffer, writes:

“Born in northern Sialkot in the year of Newton’s death, Tafazzul belonged to an eminent family who were converts to Shi’ism and close to the fading Mughal court. He studied logic, mathematics and natural philosophy in the imperial capital at Delhi, then moved to Awadh in 1745, where he rose rapidly in favour with the Nawāb Shujā’u’d-Dawla. Tafazzul enrolled in Lucknow at the celebrated college at Firangī Maḥal, a former Dutch trader’s house taken over in the name of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1693 for the cultivation of a neoteric curriculum developed by the learned Nizām-ud dīn Sahalvī, where material from the rationalist tradition of Greco-Arabic texts was taught to candidates for courtly and administrative responsibilities. The college’s training was valued within both Mughal and British systems of erudition and government. Urban notables such as Tafazzul’s clan politically exploited the resources of Indo-Persian literary and natural philosophical culture and the rationalist sciences he studied in Delhi and Lucknow. Immersion in classical logic and mathematics, including Islamic commentaries

on Euclid and Ptolemy, was combined with mastery of administrative and civil law.” [3]

Scholarly Career

Nawab Shuja ud Daula appointed him tutor to his son Saadat Ali Khan in Allahabad. There the then young Syed Dildar Ali Naqvi, who later came to be known as Ghufran Maab, became his student. In the time of Nawab Asif ud Daula, Allama Kashmiri was appointed as an ambassador to the court of governor general of East India Company at Calcutta. There he learnt Greek, Latin and English and started to translate scientific works of European scientists into Arabic to bridge the gap between the scientific revolution and the Muslim and Indian educational institutions.[1] Simon Schaffer describes:

“Tafazzul would reportedly spend his mornings on commentaries on Islamic tradition and philosophy and in teaching mathematics; dine with British colleagues; then in the afternoon and evening expound on his expertise in the contrasting schools of Islamic law. To improve his command of the Company’s language, he read a ‘history of England’ but ‘I have since given it up.’ His former colleague William Blane, now physician in Lucknow, acted as a go-between: Blane told Anderson

that Tafazzul ‘generally spends an hour or two with me every other day in reading English books ... those on Astronomy he is most fond of ... you may send him a few books in that science or in the higher branches of Mathematics.’ The vakīl started work on more challenging and rewarding materials, mainly obtained via Burrow and his friends.

These included canonical texts of eighteenth-century mathematics and rational mechanics, such as the 1769 *Mechanics of the eccentric Wearside mathematician William Emerson*, a work that offered its students a reliable version of Galilean kinematics and rational analysis. Tafazzul also studied the *Treatise of algebra* (1745) by Thomas Simpson, the mathematics professor at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, and a 1707 treatise on conic sections by the French mathematical analyst Guillaume de l’Hôpital.” [4] Science had flourished in the 18th century Europe due to public discussions in coffee houses, pubs, shops, fairs and other public places. By the end of eighteenth century CE, Calcutta had become a major center of cultural exchange where several scientific works, like James Ferguson’s “Introduction to Electricity”, Tiberius Cavallo’s “A Complete Treatise on Electricity” and his “Essay on Theory and Practice of Medical Electricity”,

George Adams's "Essays on Electricity", Thomas Beddoes's "Factitious Airs", Jean-Antoine Chaptal's "Chemistry" and scholarly journals like the "Philosophical Magazine", were in circulation. The members of The Asiatic Society, founded by William Jones in 1784, held discussions on philosophy. [5]

Works

He authored the following: [1] 1. Commentary on Conica of Appollonus.

2. Two treatise on Algebra.

3. Commentary on Conica of Diophantus.

4. Translation of Sir Isaac Newton's Principia.

5. A book on Physics.

6. A book on Western Astronomy.

Simon Schaffer writes:

"The ambition to translate Newton was certainly remarkable. By the time of Tafazzul's arrival in Calcutta there had been but one English (Andrew Motte, 1729) and one French (Marquise de Châtelet, 1759) translation of Newton's Latin treatise. The project seems to have begun in mid-1789 and continued for some time with

Reuben Burrow's encouragement. In September 1789 William Jones told William Palmer, by then British representative at Sindhia's camp, that 'his friend' Tafazzul was planning an Arabic version of Newton. Reports of progress with the work were sent by Tafazzul to Anderson and by Burrow to Shore. Burrow proposed accompanying the translation with his own notes. He reported to the Asiatic Society in November 1790 that 'the small time I had to spare ... has been employed in writing a comment on the works of Newton, and explaining them to a very ingenious native [i.e. Tafazzul], who is translating them into Arabic.' For Tafazzul this was a development of his program to master and incorporate the resources of British rational astronomy. His Shi'ite colleagues explained the intimate relationship between the development of this astronomy and the importance of public and courtly patronage of learning: they saw an important link between the pursuit of such sciences and the status of learned elites within administration and government."

[6] Some of these books were taught in Shia seminaries in the nineteenth century Lucknow. [1] His successor, Saadat Ali Khan, founded an observatory in Lucknow, but he died soon after. Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider and Nawab Nasiruddin Haider patronized modern scientific learning. [7]

Collaboration with James Dinwiddie

In 1792, Scottish science communicator James Dinwiddie, tried his luck in China but failed to impress the Emperor. Faced with financial crisis, in 1794 he migrated to Calcutta in the hopes of better prospects, and started a series of lectures on natural science and staged demonstrations of scientific phenomena. He also offered private tuitions on mathematics, astronomy and geometry.[5] He believed that without mathematical reasoning one could not dig deeper in knowledge. He said:

“Only in those parts of the science which have been mathematically considered, that natural philosophy can boast of having carried on her investigations with certainty, success and utility.”

He believed that without mathematically described knowledge, one could not go beyond a schoolboy’s understanding of science. [5] Allama Tafazzul Husain Kashmiri had already translated Newton’s “Principia” into Arabic in 1789. After Dinwiddie started teaching in Calcutta, in October 24, 1794, the old Allama enrolled himself as a student. Dinwiddie first taught him Optics and then modern geometry. To his surprise, Tafazzul was struggling with mathematics. He remarked:

“It is somewhat irregular that a man who reads so much theory should be so totally ignorant of practical mathematics.” [8] Allama was also burdened with the job of ambassador of Awadh, and he had to discontinue the tuitions. Back in Lucknow, the nawab was unhappy and called him ‘servant of the English’, for becoming too occupied with learning and translation of modern scientific knowledge. [9] In November 1795, he resumed and this time Dinwiddie taught him experimental astronomy. James Dinwiddie notes in his diary: “Much jarring between the Nabob and Tafazzul Husain – the N told him he must not consider himself as his (the N’s) servant but the servant of the English.” [10] The exchange was mutual, as Tafazzul also informed Dinwiddie on Indian and Arabic astronomy. [5]

Opposition from Orthodoxy

Famous theologian of the time, Shah Abdul Aziz, son of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, declared him an apostate. [11]

Death

In 1799, he suffered a brain hemorrhage which left his body in a state of paralysis. He died travelling from Banaras to Lucknow on 3rd of March 1801. Mirza Abu Talib Khan wrote the following elegy upon receiving the news of his death while in London:

“Alas! The zest of Learning’s cup is gone;
Whose taste ne’er cloy’d, tho’ deep the draughts;
Whose flavor yet upon the palate hangs
Nectareous, nor Reason’s thirst assuag’d
But yes; – rent is the garment of the morn;
And all dishevell’d floats the hair of night;
All bath’d in tears of dew the stars look down
With mournful eyes, in lamentation deep;
For he, their sage belov’d, is dead; who first
To Islam’s followers explain’d their laws,
Their distances, their orbits, and their times,
As great Copernicus once half divin’d,
And greater Newton proved; but, useless now,
Their work we turn with idle hand, and scan
With vacant eye, our own first master gone.” [11]

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5. Shiaphobia among the Sialvi sufis of Punjab – Prof. Tahir Kamran and Dr. Amir Khan Shahid

The Chishtiya silsilah was initiated in India by Mu‘in-ud-din Chishti in the twelfth century CE, but its resonance reached the Punjab courtesy Farid-ud-din Ganj Shakar, who established his dargah at Ajodhan (present-day Pakpattan in Pakistan). The bulk of its doctrine was developed in the subcontinent where it absorbed the cultural ethos, and it was recognised as arguably the most inclusive of all the local Sufi orders. Chishti Sufis adopted practices such as zikr (recollection of God) and sama’ (devotional music) as the spiritual signature of their silsilah, which also helped it in terms of assimilating with indigenous culture.

With Farid’s demise in 1265, the Chishtiya silsilah re-centred itself on Delhi with Nizam-ud-din Auliya as its principal protagonist. The ascendancy of Auliya as the central Chishti figure was synchronised with the split of the silsilah into Nizami and Sabri branches. Shaikh-ud-din ‘Ali Sabri (d.1291) of Kalyer (a small town near Roorkee) was the founder of the Sabri branch. However, Chishti-Sabri influence was confined only to Awadh and its surrounding areas. Thus its relevance with respect to Punjab remained just marginal. Now while

reverting to the Chishti influence in the Punjab after Farid, Sanyal maintains, Chishtiya influence suffered an apparent decline until the eighteenth century. Throughout these centuries, the Punjab witnessed the waxing influence of the Qadiriya and Suharwardiya orders.

Neo-Sufism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

The diminishing flame of Chishtiya mysticism was rekindled by a number of so-called neo-Sufis denoting new tendencies within the Sufi traditions, among them Fakhir-ud-din Dehlavi (1717–1785) and Shah Kalim Ullah (1650-1729). The impulse for Chishtiya resurgence, as Gilmartin contends, originated in Delhi where the decline of the Mughals was felt most intensely and it had explicit reflection on the works and thought of these two Chishti Sufis.

Its revival came about in the Punjab through Noor Muhammad Muharvi (1730–91), who established a khanaqah at the small town of Muhar near Bahawalpur in the mid-eighteenth century. The Chishtiya revitalisation subsequently reached its culmination in Taunsa, Golra and Sial Sharif. As a result of Muharvi's influence, Sangharh, Ahmadpur, Chachran, Makhad,

Jalalpur, Bahawalpur, Multan, Pakpattan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Hajipur, Rajanpur, Narwala, Muhammadpur, Ferozepur, Kot Mithan and Sultanpur (towns and cities located in South Punjab and Sindh) emerged as the prominent Chishti centres.

Muharvi faced a daunting task in terms of bringing about the Chishtiya renaissance primarily because, in the wake of dwindling Mughal power, Sikhs, Afghans and Marathas subjected the Punjab to their predatory raids. Punjab's social fabric was virtually ripped apart, and moral decadence and social disorientation among Muslims presented a grisly picture. Siddiqi highlights the "dominant traits" of social and moral teachings from the malfuzat literature, *Khulasa't-ul Fawa'id* and *Khair-ul Afkar*, on the life and achievements of Muharvi. In these teachings, primacy was accorded to "the ethical ideals and standard of Islam" in the code of conduct and the rules of behaviour. In a way, Muharvi's teachings reconciled Sufis with the 'ulama. In their synthesis of different, if not absolutely antithetical, strands of devotional and literal Islam, the latter had preponderance over the former. Muharvi too professed strict adherence to the shari'a as a prerequisite for entering the fold of the tariqah, relegation of *wahdat al-wujud* as a discourse specific only to a chosen few and

not meant for an open debate – it should be confined to only Akhas al-Khawwas.

Muharvi also espoused dispensing with the ideological overtones of the controversy between ‘ilm and irfan. In such an ambience where new convergences were forged for the sake of reforming Muslims, the syntheses of wahdat al-wujud and wahdat al-shahud ideologies were thought to be imperative. This synthesis served as a bridge between “the orthodox and reformist Islam of the urban areas and the syncretic and meditational forms of rural areas”.

Taunsa and Sial Sharif

Shams-ud-din Sialvi (1799–1883), Muharvi’s ‘illustrious successor’ and the spiritual preceptor of Shah Sulaman Taunsvi (1770–1850) from Tuansa Sharif, district Dera Ghazi Khan, established his khanaqah in Sial Sharif, and directed Muslims “to cling tenaciously to the path of the Shariat, reform their manners and morals”. In the 1800s, Sulaman Tuansvi established the Dar-ul‘Ulum, a seminary at Taunsa, in which theological as well as mystical instruction was dispensed. More importantly the study of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) was ‘particularly stressed’ at the Dar-ul‘Ulum. That, indeed, was a departure from the

established Chishtiya practice, since it privileged ‘ulum-i zahiri (exoteric knowledge) over ‘ulum-i batiniya (esoteric knowledge). Hence, the gradual practice of scriptural and puritanical exegesis of Islam by urban-based ‘ulama started to permeate the Chishtiya order, influencing folk Islam which was more tolerant and flexible and had been professed by Chishti Sufis since the medieval period.

Shi‘i proselytisation

In addition, what alarmed Sunni ‘ulama as well as Sufis in Punjab was Shi‘i proselytisation. In Gujrat (Punjab, Pakistan) Rizvi describes how some of the descendants of Makhdum Jahaniyan Shaikh Jalal-ud-din Bukhari, (1308–1387) embraced Shi‘ism. Similarly the guardians of the Uch khanaqah accepted Shi‘ism. Several sayyid and tafdiliya families from Punjab began to renounce their Sunni faith. Ironically, however, Rizvi does not mention the time or the year for this denominational conversion. Rough estimates gleaned from his monumental account of the Isna ‘Ashari Shi‘as in India point fleetingly to the mid-nineteenth century as the time when it took place in some parts of the Punjab. Shah Jiwana and Rojoa Sa‘adat, prominent sayyid families from Jhang District, may well have embraced Shi‘ism by then. Similarly in the late-nineteenth

century, graduates of the defunct Asaf-ud-daulah seminary of Lucknow travelled throughout North India to spread Usuli teachings. One such Usuli ‘alim, Abul Qasim Rizvi (1833–1906), vigorously promoted Usuli Shi‘ism in Lahore and its surroundings, founding congregational prayer mosques in the city and also an Imami seminary (in 1879) with the financial backing of Nawab ‘Ali Raza Khan Qizilbash. Highly influential families, like the Qizilbash, Faqir and Gardizi in Multan, contributed immensely in spreading the Shi‘i faith in the Punjab in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In these circumstances, when Shi‘i ranks were swelling, it could be argued that Sialvi pirs would have regarded Shi‘i influence to be increasingly and uncomfortably encroaching upon their area of spiritual influence. Sayyid Muhammad Ghaus, Sayyid Chiragh Shah, Sardar Husain Shah and Sayyid Ghulam ‘Abbas were among the Shi‘a Rajoa Sayyids in Chiniot tehsil of Jhang District who held positions of pre-eminence under British rule. The colonial Gazetteer of Jhang District of 1883–84 contained information about the presence of Shi‘as, which would have been alarming to the pirs of Sial Sharif:

“Shi‘as are unusually numerous in Jhang, a fact due to the influence of the Shi‘a Kuraishis of Shorkot and

Hassu Balel, and the Sayads of Uch who are connected with the famous Sayad family of Belot in Dera Ismael Khan District and Shah Jiwana and Rajoa in the Jhang District. They are the most bigoted type. They observe the Muharram most strictly, abstaining from all luxuries for the first ten days of the month, and on the 10th they accompany the Taziahs bareheaded and bare-footed. They throw dust on their heads and beat their breasts with extreme violence, and allow neither Hindu nor Muhammadan to approach the Taziah without baring his head and removing his shoes.”

In 1929, the District Gazetteer likewise explained the increasing hold of Shi‘as in the district: “Shi‘ism is on the increase in the district. The influx of wealth on account of canal irrigation has invested some Sayyid families with added importance, and has proved helpful in spreading Shi‘ism”.

‘Rawafiz’ and Mazhab-i Shi‘a

It is against the above background that the chapter, entitled ‘Rawafiz’, in Shams-ud-din Sialvi’s Malfuzat Miraat-ul ‘Ashiqeen translated from Persian by Ghulam Nizam-ud-din Mauroolvi and put together by his disciple Muhammad Sa‘id, can be discussed. The exact date of the conversation on which the narrative is based is not

known, though tentatively speaking, the late nineteenth century seems plausible. That book could not be published before 1970, almost 90 years after Sialvi's death..

The other text under review is Qamar-ud-din's book *Mazhab-i Shi'a* (1957). In addition to Shi'a influence, it is important to differentiate between the late colonial period and the early post-independence period of Pakistan which is reflected in these writings, one sample of which will be scrutinised below. The colonial period was, as we have seen, a period of competing revivalisms, marked by the emergence of a politics of religious identity that pitted Sunnis against, first, Ahmadis and, later, Shi'a, against a backdrop of intense conflict about the role of religion in public life.

Hagiographical accounts of Shams-ud-din, such as *Fauz-ul Miqal fi Khulafa-i Pir Sial*, make no reference to his disapproval of Shi'as. However his *malfuzat Mira't-ul-'Ashiqeen* contains a chapter on *Rawafiz* (denoting Shi'as), with Shams-ud-din responding to the questions asked him by his disciples. His emphatic advice to them is that the faith is not complete (*iman-i kamil*) until one accepts all the Companions, righteous and truthful. Qamar-ud-din Sialvi's 125-page book *Mazhab-i Shi'a*, published in 1957, is significant for its

rarity as, unlike other malfuzat literature, it was authored by the Sialvi pir himself.

From the eighteenth century onwards, therefore, Shi‘a-Sunni (read Chishti here) antagonism appears to be predicated on their respective perceptions of the first three Caliphs. Chishti pirs, assuming an antithetical position vis-a-vis Shi‘as, marked a departure from their fundamental postulates which, in their very essence, should have transcended any sectarian persuasion. With the onset of Chishtiya revivalism, the proponents of that silsilah shunned to a substantial extent its all-inclusive character and redefined what they believed in the light of foundational texts.

Sialvi pirs represented this trend whereby the shari‘a came to hold centrality in the re-defined Chishtiya belief system. The proselytization of Usuli Shi‘ism in the Punjab exacerbated sectarian differences. These developments were construed in myriad ways, one of which had been Qamar-ud-din Sialvi’s anti-Shi‘a zeal, articulated in the Mazhab-i Shi‘a.

Source: Tahir Kamran and Amir Khan Shahid, “Shari‘a, Shi‘as and Chishtiya Revivalism: Contextualising the Growth of Sectarianism in the Tradition of the Sialvi Saints of the Punjab”, Journal of

the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 24 (3), Special Issue: Isna 'Ashari and Isma'ili Shi'ism: from South Asia to the Indian Ocean (July 2014), pp. 477-492.

6. Refutations of mysticism in Lucknow hawzah

Within the Shi‘i community (of north India) the new Usuli school faced no more formidable contenders for control over religious institutions and notable patronage than Sufi leaders. The notables in Awadh did not originally hold the ulama and mujtahids in high esteem, rather honored Sufi pirs. Sufis believed in the metaphysical doctrine of existential monism (wahdat ul-wujud), which in its extreme forms approximated pantheism. Sufi leaders, or pirs, claimed to enjoy divine graces (karamat), to perform miracles, and to be privy to inspiration (kashf) from God. Indian Muslims practiced Sufism widely, including those in Lucknow, where people attended meditation and chanting sessions, seeking to reach mystical states (vajd va hal).

The legalist ulama objected that music and revelry often accompanied these gatherings, lamenting that many high notables attended them and believed Sufism to be a path to spiritual well-being. Several of the powerful court physicians in Faizabad left sons who continued a tradition of Sufism and Akhbarism.

Even formally, Sunni pirs often benefited from the largesses of Awadh’s Imami rulers. Asafu’d-Dawlah granted twelve rent-free villages, yielding Rs. 30,000, to the pirs of Salon in perpetuity. The pirs spent most of

the proceeds in supporting itinerant faqirs and Hindu Vairagis, without distinction of religion, who made short stops in Salon.

At any one time a hundred such visitors congregated in this largely Muslim town of four thousand. Other Sunni Sufi endowments existed at Bhadarsa near Faizabad, endowed by Asafu'd-Dawlah with lands yielding Rs. 15,000 per year, and at Manikpur in Partabghar, with Rs. 4,000 per year.

Some pirs had Shi'i sympathies. Mir Taqi Mir related how his father, a Shi'i, discussed the Umayyads (enemies of 'Ali) with a Sufi leader who replied that he had, thank God, never mentioned their names. The Usuli clergy said Sufis adopted Shi'ism only pro forma, and that Sufis followed their pirs only because they expected worldly benefits.

Aside from Sufi brotherhoods (tariqah), many notables in Awadh cultivated the mystical philosophy of such Shi'i thinkers as Mulla Sadra Shirazi, whom the Usuli jurists dismissed as a heretic.

Although Sufi adoption of Shi'ism in Awadh may often have aimed at gaining court patronage, some Shi'i Sufis developed their own subculture and literary traditions. They were influenced by the Shi'i Nimatu'llahi order,

which had spread to Hyderabad and based itself there after Usuli persecution in Safavid Iran.

Indian missionaries of this order promoted a revival in Iran in the late eighteenth century, meeting violent repression from Usuli clergy, who saw the pirs as rivals to their own authority and access to court patronage.

Sufis in Awadh told a story that the early Shi'i figure ash-Sharif ar-Radi was praying behind his brother, the great scholar Murtada 'Alamu'l-Huda, when he suddenly left the mosque. When rebuked, he replied that he had seen the prayer leader covered with blood and could not continue, because of ritual pollution.

When asked about this, 'Alamu'l-Huda confessed that he had been considering an issue in the ritual law of menstruation, admitting that ar-Radi was right to have acted as he did. In this story, 'Alamu'l-Huda stands for those concerned with outer appearances, while ar-Radi represents mystics devoted to inner reality (ahl-i batin).

The tale demeaned the official ulama as overly concerned with ritual law, and exalted the Sufis, for whom prayer had no significance unless the heart was also engaged. True to form, the Usuli ulama complained of the story's legal inaccuracy, since such a thought would not invalidate the prayers. The appearance of

classical Shi‘i authors in the story indicates that the Sufis were working in an Imami tradition.

Sufis and the Friday Prayers

The establishment of Friday prayers in 1786 helped provoke a crisis. As long as Shi‘is simply held informal mourning sessions for the Imams, the community could remain diffuse and diverse. The holding of formal prayers in congregation at Hasan Riza Khan’s palace required that criteria for community membership be set up. Moreover, Hasan Riza Khan and other notables created tensions by bestowing patronage both on Sufis and on their Usuli rivals. The appointment of an Usuli prayer leader proved divisive, since to pray behind him implied acceptance of his spiritual leadership. The Sufis held meditation sessions, with dancing and singing, on Fridays in the same hall where Shi‘is said Friday prayers in congregation.

The Sufis did not join the prayers, some suggesting that praying in public was prideful. They said that anyone with inner purity did not need such rituals, which only bestowed outer purity.

In the 1780s at the Awadh court the struggle between jurists and mystics grew fierce. Once the Sufi Shah Khayru’llah told his patron Hasan Riza Khan that he did

not go to Karbala, for fear of Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani, whom he accused of extorting money from Indian pilgrims to the shrine of Imam Husayn.

(Syed Dildar Ali) Nasirabadi, having studied in the shrine cities, protested that such fears were wholly unfounded.

In 1786, about four months after the congregational prayers began, Sayyid Dildar 'Ali launched a stinging attack on the Sufis in his afternoon sermon. He condemned those who claimed to meet every day with God, or even to be God Himself, and who said they knew the condition of the seven heavens. Nasirabadi sneered that if one asked them a question about Islamic law, they would be unable to answer. He accused them of innovating heretical rituals and laws. Since Sunnis in India often attacked Shi'is as innovators, Nasirabadi made this charge cautiously. He defined a heretical innovation (*bidah*) as a practice contrary to the path of the Prophet (PBUH). For instance, he said, there is an oral report from Muhammad (PBUH) that whoever weeps for Husayn will enter heaven. Therefore, the mourning sessions held by Shi'is for the Imam are not heretical innovations, though they grew up after the time of the Prophet (PBUH). Sunni critics, of course, did see such mourning sessions as heretical.

Nasirabadi also criticized Sufis for the practice of spiritual retreat and seclusion, saying that meeting with the believers and associating with one another is much praised in the oral reports from the Imams. In later sermons, as well, he returned to these themes, criticizing Sufi ascetic ideas and what he saw as pantheism.

He rejected the analogy that God flows in his creation as water in milk, or that God is as the ocean and beings are as the waves. Such a view, he said, would reduce us to saying that dogs and pigs are God Himself.

Shah Ali Akbar Maududi vs Syed Dildar Ali Naqvi

The Chishti leader Shah ‘Ali Akbar Mawdudi (d. 1795), Nasirabadi’s keenest competitor for the support of Hasan Riza Khan, led the Friday morning meditation sessions, but he and his following refused to attend the congregational prayers. They prayed Friday prayers elsewhere, with Mawdudi as the prayer leader.

Shah ‘Ali Akbar, stung by Nasirabadi’s anathemas against the Sufis from his newly won pulpit, sent Hasan Riza Khan a letter saying “Praise be to God! Is it right that someone should now mount the minbar and pronounce curses on the person who founded the congregational prayers?” When Hasan Riza Khan brought the matter up with Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali, he

replied that he did not wish Mawdudi to be among those whom he cursed.

If he categorized himself as a pir, Nasirabadi bore no blame. But Mawdudi considered himself a law-abiding mystic, insisting that the prerequisite for mystical initiation was to follow the holy Law. He felt that the principles of esoteric knowledge, like those of jurisprudence, were based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus, and analog. He therefore strongly objected to being branded a heretic.

The chief minister perceived no contradiction between the legalism of the Usulis and the mystical approach of his favorite Sufis, still hoping to find a way for the two to coexist. He broached the idea that Sayyid Dildar 'Ali meet Shah 'Ali Akbar personally and iron out their differences. Nasirabadi dismissed the man as a fraud, saying that Mawdudi refused to participate in the Shi'i prayers only because of his many Sunni followers.

Sayyid Dildar 'Ali said he feared that he might confuse the Shi'i congregation if he now, after having mounted the pulpit and cursed Sufis every Friday, expressed a wish to meet a pir.

In the early 1790s a final break came. One evening Hasan Riza Khan brought Shah 'Ali Akbar to the Great

Imambarah just before sunset. The new Friday prayers mosque stood next to the Imambarah, and the believers were preparing to say the sunset (maghrib) prayers. At sunset Nasirabadi normally ordered candles to be lit at that Great Imambarah, out of respect to the cenotaphs stored there.

That evening, however, he waited, in hopes that the Sufis would leave. Hasan Riza Khan defused this tense situation, arranging a pro forma (zahiri) meeting between the Usuli and the Sufi.

The chief minister wanted Shah ‘Ali Akbar to pray behind the jurist (mujtahid). The negotiations broke down, however, and Mawdudi led his Sufis in the sunset prayer at the Imambarah. Hasan Riza Khan went over to the Friday prayers mosque to say the prayers behind Nasirabadi with the Usulis.

Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali ardently requested of the chief minister that he be excused from meeting the Sufi. Shah ‘Ali Akbar at that point fell ill and had to leave. Nasirabadi was happy at this development, which allowed him to avoid meeting the man.

The incident proved decisive for the development of the Shi‘i community in Awadh. The Sufi Shi‘is, excluded from the official congregation, lost opportunities to

exercise influence with, and receive patronage from, high notables. Shi'i Sufism might have acted as an ecumenical force, since pirs often had Sunni or even Hindu followers.

The Shi'ism of the Usuli ulama emphasized strident communalism, such militancy ultimately provoked a Sunni backlash.

Usuli-Sufi Polemics: Ash-shihab ath-thaqib (الشهاب الثاقب) by S. Dildar 'Ali Nasirabadi

The analysis of texts generated by the Usuli-Sufi conflict helps us understand the mentalities involved and is useful for several reasons. The intellectual disputes between Usulis and Sufi Shi'is in Awadh well illustrate religious developments. But attitudes toward ritual, as was just demonstrated, could in themselves have an impact on the shape of the community, and so on society.

The question arises whether these texts can be read so as to shed some light on the social conflicts that also underlay the enmity between mujtahids and pirs.

Nasirabadi followed his efforts to exclude Sufis from his congregation with an ideological assault on them. He dedicated it to Hasan Riza Khan, whom he called the

founder of Friday prayers, but wrote it in Arabic, directing it primarily at the ulama. The book attacked both the metaphysical Sufism of classical upper-class thinkers and the Sufism of the orders, with their rituals.

He quoted Imami oral reports, and presented what he said was an original refutation of existential monism (*wahdat ul-wujud*). He refuted the medieval Shi'i thinker and admirer of the Andalusian mystic Ibn 'Arabi, Sayyid Haydar Amuli, whose work defended the conception of existential monism in a Shi'i context. This focus suggests Amuli's influence among India's Sufi Shi'is.

Beyond the metaphysical controversy Nasirabadi concentrated on showing the illegitimacy for Twelver Shi'is of Sufi beliefs and practices. He began with the doctrine of inspiration (*kashf*) which literally means "uncovering". He explained that it consisted of seeing spiritual lights and hearing voices.

Sayyid Dildar 'Ali objected that instances of mystical inspiration cannot be verified, and that the persons who related tales about it or said they experienced it cannot be trusted, since they also told miracle stories about the enemies of 'Ali, or fell into other doctrinal errors.

He said it cannot be told whether such inspiration comes from God or from Satan, since most Sufis engaged in ascetic practices, such as rigorous fasting, that impaired their judgment. This section reveals the close connection the prayer leader saw between Sufism and Sunnism, much of his attack on Sufism being originally elaborated against the Sunni Naqshbandis of Delhi.

Nasirabadi criticized the Sufi practice of inducing a trance state to achieve mystical ecstasy (wajd), excoriating the mystics for falling on the ground and asking God for healing, then singing, beating drums, and dancing. He charged that Sunni kings, such as the Umayyad Muawiyah, promoted these pre-Islamic practices to distract Shi'is from their political opposition to him.

He quoted Sufi works to prove that Sufis from every social class engaged in ecstatic exercises accompanied by music, an art unanimously condemned by Shi'i jurists. The mystics, he said, invented ritual practices such as vegetarianism, the giving up of fine clothes, and retreats into seclusion for meditation, which he stigmatized as monkery (rahbaniyyah), recalling the oral report from the Prophet that there is no monkery in Islam.

He also objected to Sufi criticisms of the wealthy, quoting from oral reports attributed to the Imams on the permissibility of seeking to become rich as a means of avoiding the sorts of sins to which poverty might drive one.

Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali not only defended the wealthy but accused Sufis of uncontrolled passions, implying that they actually addressed their mystical love poetry, ostensibly for God, to real women or slave-boys. He cited Imami oral reports condemning Sufis. Nasirabadi further disparaged the loud or silent group repetition (dhikr) of the creed “There is no God but god,” marshaling oral reports that forbade the raising of the voice during worship.

Usulis forbade the oath of allegiance and obedience (bayat) that adepts gave to the Sufi master, and the cloak (khirqah) of initiation they received from him in turn. In conclusion, Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali branded Sufis innovators (ahl al-bidah), saying the Prophet Muhammad forbade association with heretics. He advocated the shunning of Shi‘i Sufis, urging that whenever an Usuli saw them in the street he should publicly curse them as apostates.

Indeed, he saw all sects save the Imamis as unbelievers on grounds of incorrect dogma. At the end of the book

he included the formula of repentance after apostasy in an effort to convince Sufi Shi'is to come over to Usulism.

Sufis replied vigorously to Nasirabadi, writing in Persian. An anonymous manuscript (Radd-i Shihab ath-thaqib) survives by a Sufi in rebuttal of Lucknow's prayer leader. The treatise contended that the spread of Sufism among Shi'is was of old standing. Great Imami thinkers had in their biographical dictionaries accepted the division of Shi'is into legalists (zahiri) and mystics (batini).

Indeed, the tract's author wrote, all Sufis have a Shi'ite tinge because of their respect for the mystical knowledge of 'Ali, only the Naqshbandis being truly Sunnis. The mystical knowledge referred to in the Imami oral reports, he argued, is the Sufi path (tariqat), and many eminent Shi'ite ulama forbade the laity to criticize Sufi leaders.

He maintained that mystics (urafa') are more noble than the ulama because God gives them perfection and their way has transcended a dependence on books and the intellectual doubts it engenders.

The nameless Sufi emphasized that many great Imamis were Sufis, including important Safavid-era thinkers.

He attacked the practice of publicly insulting Sufis as pure fanaticism, and defended Bayazid Bistami, whose pantheistic-sounding sayings included “Praise to me, how great is my glory!” (سبحانی ما أعظم شأنی).

He explained that Bistami did not assert his own divinity, but rather claimed to have become as nothing, so that only God was left. Moreover, he added, some oral reports from the Imams supported the doctrine of existential monism.

The treatise contended that Usulis erred in trying to distinguish between those Safavid thinkers who actually adhered to Sufism and those who only thought well of it, the figures in question having all been practicing Sufis. The Usulis wished to claim the great thinkers of the Imami heritage as their own, perhaps partially because they believed in consensus as a source of law. But Sufi Shi‘is presented themselves as the true heirs of a major Safavid tradition.

The Sufi’s rebuttal ended by defending the listening to music and the bestowal of cloaks of initiation. He insisted that Shi‘i law permitted music that inspired a desire for the hereafter. He said that music was originally forbidden among Shi‘is because of the need for pious dissimulation (taqiyyah) in times when Shi‘i

songs put believers in danger. In Shi‘i-ruled Awadh, he implied, Shi‘is could sing freely.

Another revealing encounter between the official prayer leader and a mystic occurred in the next decade. In 1803, an Iranian Sufi named Mawlavi Sami came into conflict with Lucknow’s Usulis. Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali, fifty years old, had been the capital’s prayer leader for seventeen years and had grown firmly attached to the Awadh establishment. Mawlavi Sami attacked him on precisely this point, sending him a list of questions.

From the first, he endeavored to put the prayer leader on the defensive. Mawlavi Sami wrote that the truly pious among the learned avoided rulers, thus remaining obscure, while scholars seeking wealth and high position gravitated to the court, becoming prominent. What, then, should laymen do? The Sufi suggested that the mujtahids’ position in society derived from compromises they made with the impious rulers, and implied that laymen should emulate less opportunistic jurists.

Nasirabadi attempted to neutralize the issue of social class. He said that if an upright mujtahid and qualified exemplar (marja) avoided rulers, he should be consulted. On the other hand, if a jurist sought

riches licitly, a layman could not refuse to follow him simply because of his wealth.

After all, he said, many prophets and great Shi'i thinkers were wealthy, and the high class standing of Muhammad Baqir Majlisi and his association with the Safavid court was occasioned by proper motives and resulted in obvious benefits for the faith.

Mawlavi Sami next quoted scripture condemning tyranny and forbidding Muslims to aid despots. He said that both jurists and mystics knew very well that none among the ruling classes in India observed the limits set by the holy Law.

Was it right, he pointedly inquired, to call such rulers tyrants, or not? Nasirabadi agreed that the literal sense of Imami oral reports indicated such a step. But he said the Qur'an denied that it ordained any discomfort for the believers in their religion. Perhaps the Imam meant to forbid anyone to approve in his heart of tyranny, or the word "tyranny" meant only wrongdoing to the House of the Prophet.

Sayyid Dildar 'Ali casuistically justified cooperation with the despotic government of Sa'adat 'Ali Khan, which because of its Shi'ism at least supported the family of the Prophet.

The Sufi asked the prayer leader whether it was right to associate with the notables and to accept grants from them, of cash, goods, or land and villages. Nasirabadi said that one might accept gifts from tyrants as long as one had no sure knowledge that they were usurped property. Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali himself took grants of cash and villages, where Hindu peasants labored to support his Shi‘i religious office.

Mawlavi Sami then chastised Usulis for cursing Sufis and said that many Safavid thinkers had spoken well of Sufism. Nasirabadi rejected this precedent, since in dogma (اصول دين) emulation was forbidden.

He allowed that pious continence (zuhd) like that of ‘Ali’s companion Abu Dharr could never be deprecated. But Sufis, he said, bore enmity for the Imams, and Safavid thinker Majlisi-II’s condemnation of them was well known. Nasirabadi dismissed Safavid thinkers who admired Sufism as heretical followers of Ibn ‘Arabi.

Mawlavi Sami rephrased his question, complaining that in those days cursing Sufis had become as common among Shi‘is as cursing the Sunni caliphs. He recalled north Indian Shi‘is, such as Shaykh ‘Ali Hazin and Husayn Khan ‘Azimabadi, who thought well of Sufism, and pointed to the writings of Shah Nimatu’llah Wali

Kirmani (d. 1437), founder of the Ni'matu'llahi order, as examples of Sufi Shi'ism. Nasirabadi reiterated his objections to Sufi rituals as innovations, attacking Sunni Sufis as opponents of Shi'ism.

The Usuli attack on Sufism focused on beliefs and rituals that the jurisprudents branded unscriptural innovations influenced by Sunnism. The Sufis made the case that they represented an important spiritual tradition within Shi'ism, including many Safavid exponents, and so were not simply innovating heretics originating in Sunni-dominated northern India.

The mujtahids and the pirs argued, not just about purely religious issues in dogma and ritual, but about social issues as well. The Usulis extolled the virtues of associating with the ruling classes for the sake of the Shi'i faith, while some Sufi Shi'is accused them of moral turpitude in so compromising themselves. In defending the goodness of wealth to Mawlavi Sami, Sayyid Dildar 'Ali upheld the values of the qasabah-based service elite of which he formed a part, as well as those of his patrons, the high notables.

The Social Context

The struggle of Usulis to displace Sufi leaders from positions of influence took place in society as well as in

doctrinal tracts. To look at the conflict on a more concrete level requires a focus on the social-control mechanisms invoked by the Usulis, and on the social interests that underlay the dispute. Mujtahids in Awadh had no Sufi pirs put to death, as happened in Iran. But Usulis verbally abused Sufis in public and shunned them.

Nasirabadi declared Shi‘i believers in existential monism ritually unclean (najis), so that no one should eat with them.

Usulis should curse even Sayyids and true believers in the Shi‘i creed who held heretical Sufi doctrines and gave allegiance to a Sufi pir, holding that through mystical exercises one could draw near God. Still, Nasirabadi did not put Sufis completely outside the pale. One might accept food from one, and should help out even a Sufi relative in need.

An Usuli should not curse a Shi‘i simply for wearing the patched robes of a Sufi, but should ascertain his beliefs first, though wearing such clothing indicated moral corruption at the very least.

Nasirabadi’s control over charitable contributions allowed him to attract students with stipends and to train a new generation of anti-Sufi scholars. Sayyid Azam

‘Ali Bankori, for instance, wrote against Sufis and in favor of marriage, and Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Musavi the preacher (vaiz) attacked Sufis and Sunnis in his sermons. The campaign against the Sufis created an atmosphere of witch-hunting among Awadh’s Shi‘is.

A man could be publicly disgraced and cursed on mere suspicion of Sufi tendencies. While these practices benefited the ulama in helping to cut off patronage to their Sufi competitors, they made life unpleasant even for respectable persons of slightly unorthodox views.

Sayyid Najaf ‘Ali Kashmiri, arriving in Faizabad in the late 1790’s, inclined to the upper-class mysticism of the Isfahan school but had no links to a Sufi order. A self-effacing man, once when someone mistook him for an attendant at a public bath, he obligingly helped the fellow bathe. His commentaries on mystical works by Safavid thinkers, coupled with his ascetic bent, led his opponents to accuse him of being a Sufi.

To save his reputation he publicly had to abuse the Sufis as heretical innovators guilty of antinomianism and esoteric interpretation of the scriptures. More lay behind such controversies than a high-minded concern with correct doctrine. Aqa Ahmad Bihbahani observed that when any of the ambitious ulama in Faizabad saw that a

scholar had gained renown and might become a source for emulation for the laity, they smeared him as a Sufi or an Akhbari.

In 1816, Nasirabadi's biographer said that Sufi meetings had declined among Awadh's Shi'is to such an extent that both the high and the low opposed Sufism. Though an exaggeration, the statement probably reflects social trends. In Jaunpur an important family of religious dignitaries traditionally maintained in their neighborhood a Sufi center (khanqah) that had been built by Mufti Sayyid Mubarak Jaunpuri (d. 1687).

In the late 1790s the building fell to ruin. The family had by that time become Shi'is, and they made an architectural statement of their new faith by building an imambarah on the site. In the Sufi center of Salon, one Sadiq 'Ali Shah raised an imambarah in 1796.

Nasirabadi's sons carried on the campaign against Sufism in the 1820s and 1830s, and it clearly remained an issue within the Shi'i community. The mujtahids ruled that while the Imams and great Shi'is may have performed miracles, all such acts attributed to Sufis were lies. They forbade marriage between a Shi'i woman and a Sufi Shi'i, even one of sound doctrine, as long as he attended chanting sessions. (Although Sayyid

Dildar ‘Ali had earlier felt reluctant to anathematize someone solely on grounds of practice, his sons took a harder line.) Conversions to Shi‘ism from Sunnism also raised questions. Some Sunnis claiming descent from the medieval mystic ‘Abdu’l-Qadir Gilani became Shi‘is in the 1820s, but refused to curse their ancestor.

They said cursing him would advertise their Shi‘ism and prevent them from dissimulating with Sunnis. The mujtahid coolly replied that if someone deserved to be cursed, being related to him was no excuse for not doing so. The Usulis’ hatred of Sufism extended even to matters of literary usage, and they forbade the use of the Sufi term *ishq*, overwhelming love, in describing one’s relationship with God, on the grounds that it was unscriptural and implied a reprehensible excess and anthropomorphism.

The issues of asceticism and Sufism to some extent involved matters of social class. Akhund Mulla Muhammad Riza Kashmiri, a celebrated ascetic and Akhbari contemporary of the wealthy prayer leader Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali Nasirabadi, owned a small mill. He himself sometimes ground the wheat that people brought him, and sometimes he had his male or female servant do the job. He lived on the proceeds, supported his dependents, and gave away excess profit to the poor.

The story goes that once a high notable from the court of Asafu'd-Dawlah attempted to visit him on an elephant. The pious mulla waved him away from his gate, protesting that, as a poor man, he could only be met by other poor men. Mulla Muhammad Riza's asceticism and God-fearing ways lent him a great deal of popularity. The Akhbaris Taju'd-Din Husayn Khan and Subhan 'Ali Khan, tax-farmers hired and then dismissed by Nawab Sa'adat 'Ali Khan, pleaded with Mulla Muhammad Riza to pray for them, and at length he acceded to their importuning. Attributing their later reinstatement to his intercession with God, they offered him a ten-thousand-rupee reward, but he refused it.

Whereas small landed proprietors, such as the Nasirabadis, or tax-farmers such as Subhan 'Ali Khan, depended on the goodwill of the government for their continuing prosperity, a small-time miller like Kashmiri could afford to be more independent.

He had sympathy for the peasants who brought him their grain to be ground, and he certainly preferred the company and welfare of the poor to that of the rich.

His asceticism made a virtue of the relative poverty of his social class, and he refused to become involved in the unstable life of intrigues that acceptance of ruling-

class patronage would have entailed. Though he was not a member of a Sufi order, his lifestyle came closer to the ideal preached by Sufis like Mawlawi Sami than did that of most Usuli ulama.

His steadfast Akhbarism marked his independence from the mujtahids, exemplifying the kind of sectarian Shi‘ism that artisans practiced even after the Usulis created a formal religious establishment and wielded great power at court.

Awadh’s notables also continued to give patronage to Sufis. In the early 1830s, Roberts reported that a few years earlier a mendicant mystic called Shahji had come into high favor with the ruler of Awadh, and was given permission to levy small contributions for his support from shopkeepers throughout the capital. Although he collected only five cowries (کوڑیاں) a day from each one, a very small sum, the total from all the bazaars amounted to a considerable revenue.

The Usuli campaign for social closure by excluding Sufi practices from the Shi‘i community derived partially from a desire to monopolize religious authority and resources. By making an argument that the Usuli style of life was more scriptural, and by painting the Sufi Shi‘is as heretics and crypto-Sunnis, the Usulis

succeeded in weakening Sufi legitimacy within the Awadh ruling class: Their weapons included social ostracism, public humiliation, and the denial of marriage and inheritance rights.

This campaign had the latent usefulness of providing a way of smearing newly immigrant competitors for patronage or authority.

Conclusion: Social Class, Hierarchy, and Authority

The dispute between status groups (mystics, traditional authorities, rationalist jurists) set the intellectual terms of the struggle for control of Awadh's growing religious establishment. But the social dimension of the conflict is obvious from the frequency with which opponents argued over the goodness, badness, and nature of wealth and property. The dispute among Sufis, Akhbaris, and Usulis took place at three social levels.

First, some religious figures competed among themselves for spiritual leadership of Awadh's towns and middle landholding families.

Second, some struggled to monopolize the patronage of the high notables and to control their religious culture as well. The fusion of the religious idioms promoted by learned men from the intermediate strata with those of

the high notables created a dominant ideology (dominant among the Shi‘i propertied classes). Third, religious officials from the landed classes battled with charismatic personalities or traditional authorities from the bazaar classes. The Usuli establishment strove to dominate Shi‘is at all levels of society; but in preindustrial societies like Awadh, the majority of tradespeople maintained their own religious ideologies.

Some conflicts between Sufis and Usulis involved competition among learned men of similar social and economic backgrounds. For men from the small landed classes in the Islamic lineage centers, either Usulism or Sufism could provide bases for religious domination and avenues of influence with the large landholding and ruling classes.

They chose their path according to family background, local tradition, and personal inclination or ambition. Where learned men of similar social background competed for notable-class patronage, their disputes seldom centered on whether wealth was good or bad. They took its goodness for granted.

Examples abound of status-group rivalry lacking any dimension of class conflict. The Shi‘i ulama of Nasirabad and the pirs of Salon competed with one

another for the benefices and other patronage that the high notables could bestow. The decline of Mughal Delhi and the rise of Shi‘i-ruled Lucknow posed a challenge to Sunni Sufis of middle landholding background used to Mughal patronage.

Chishtis, like Shah ‘Ali Akbar Mawdudi, himself from Delhi, parlayed their pro-‘Alid sentiments into an asset in attracting the patronage of rising Shi‘i notables. The jurists staffing the emergent religious establishment showed intense hostility to the charismatic Sufis.

The Imami ulama bested the Sufis by their strong commitment to communalist Shi‘ism and their specialized knowledge of Ja‘fari law. They could not, however, altogether stop Awadh notables from patronizing the mystics.

The issues of whether wealth was good or not and of the propriety of cooperating with the government more often arose when the competing status groups also derived from different economic classes. Here, a Marxian model, or at least a Weberian model of social closure informed by the Marxian idea of conflict between economic classes, has greater explanatory power.

Mystics who stood outside the benefice (madad-i ma'ash) system of the prebendal state could criticize the government as tyrannical and denounce the official ulama for compromising themselves by cooperating with it. It is possible that critical outsiders like Mawlavi Sami had ties to Iranian long-distance traders or other social classes with minimal dependency on the agrarian bureaucracy in Lucknow.

The artisan and laboring classes practiced yet another kind of mysticism. Even where they were Shi'i, they often wished to remain aloof from the state and to maintain their independence from the official ulama. Both Akhbarism and Sufism offered alternative sources of legitimation for their leaders. The tensions between Mulla Muhammad Riza Kashmiri and the Usulis derived, not from competition for patronage from the rich, but from the Usuli establishment's desire to dominate the entire body of the faithful.

The independence of popular-class sectarian movements, such as those in Murshidabad, stood in the way of such hierocratic domination. One basis for elective affinity between Sufism and Akhbarism and popular-class leaders lay in the ease with which these ideologies allowed religious leaders from the bazaar, who had no leisure, to pursue complicated rationalist

studies, to make charismatic or traditional claims to authority. Moreover, as Usulism became the dominant ideology, groups seeking to maintain their independence of the ulama or of the state often clung even more tightly to alternative ideologies.

The cultural dominance of the Usuli ulama among Shi'i notables led to less status at court for traditional Muslim spiritual leaders like Sufis and Akhbaris. The ousting of the pirs proved important, since they often had Shi'i, Sunni, and Hindu disciples. Their more tolerant, often syncretic Islam had developed in traditional Mughal society, itself a compromise, or collaboration, between Muslims and Hindus. Some Awadh notables continued an open approach to intercommunal relations, but Usuli exclusiveness began markedly to affect government policy from the 1820s.

Three reasons can be adduced for Usulism's victory. The first is the attractions for a new generation of Shi'i ulama of this ideology, which legitimated lay-clerical differentiation and gave the mujtahids the sole prerogative of interpreting the Law, demanding the obedience of laymen to their rulings. Given the increased opportunities for clerical patronage and posts in the growing Shi'i state, Usulism made more sense to young north Indian ulama than it had to their fathers.

The second reason is the largely successful use of exclusionary closure by Usuli ulama to assert claims to religious posts and resources and to deprive rivals of that patronage. Their strategies included a form of credentialism, in which they recognized only diplomas from Usulis as a proper qualification to fill clerical posts. They also resorted to more violent means of exclusion, such as verbal abuse and public humiliation of rivals, branding them heretics and non-Muslims. This professional closure succeeded better among propertied Shi'is than among the popular classes, who often retained their own, untrained, religious leadership.

The third reason is the preference for Usuli ideology by the emergent Awadh state. As a government bureaucracy grew up, with the prayer leaders and muftis as its religious wing, state officials favored more rational-legal bases for authority. Usulism was much more suited, at that place and time, to integration into the Awadh state than either Akhbarism or Shi'i Sufism.

It sanctioned formal religious ceremonies, such as Friday congregational prayer, which became important to the state as an expression of regional identity and semiautonomy, whereas Akhbaris opposed the institution, and Sufis refused to bow behind the official prayer leader. Moreover, the tension between the Shi'i

state and the clergy was less in Usulism than in Indian-style conservative Akhbarism, which disallowed many state functions during the Occultation. The state's increasing support for Usulis was crucial to their power, since "a class, race, sex, or ethnic group only accomplishes domination to the extent that its exclusionary prerogatives are backed up by the persuasive instruments of the state."

Source: J. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*; pp. 146 – 172, University of California Press, Berkeley (1988).

7. The debate between Mulla Tahir Qummi and Mulla Taqi Majlisi on sufism – Dr. Ata Anzali

Mulla Muhammad-Tahir Shirazi Najafi Qummi (d. 1689) was one of the most prominent religious scholars at the forefront of the attacks against Sufism. Biographical sources cite him as an eminent theologian and scholar of hadith.

He was born sometime in the early seventeenth century in Fars province to an ordinary household. For unknown reasons, his family moved to the shrine city of Najaf in modern-day Iraq when he was very young. We know nothing else about this important period of his life.

Some years later, around 1638, he fled Najaf for Iran, fearing the imminent Ottoman takeover of Iraq and its repercussions. Qummi's literary activities seem to have begun soon after he settled in Qom.

It is clear from his earliest writings that, as a theologian, he had strong opinions about philosophical and mystical interpretations of Shi'ism, considering it his foremost duty to warn people of the dangers of such readings. His writings paint a picture of an erudite and knowledgeable scholar who was passionate about defending the teachings of the twelve imams, as he understood them.

Sometime before 1650, at a time when public and elite opinion was still favorably inclined toward Sufism, he wrote a short treatise attacking it. Qummi's writings attracted the eye of Muhammad-Taqi Majlisi (d. 1659), one of the most charismatic and popular Twelver scholars of the era.

Majlisi was a scholar of hadith and a student of the legendary shaykh Baha al-Din Muhammad 'Amili, otherwise known as Shaykh Baha'i (d. 1621), and Majlisi inherited many of the Sufi proclivities of his teacher. He took it upon himself to write a gloss on Qummi's treatise, refuting the latter's arguments against Sufism.

Qummi, never one to shy from debate, embraced his role as the underdog and responded to Majlisi's counterarguments in a detailed supergloss. By the early eighteenth century, perceptions of Sufism had changed so dramatically that Majlisi's prominent son, Muhammad-Baqir (d. 1698), was explaining away his father's clear Sufi proclivities by casting them as a strategy to befriend misguided Sufis in hopes of converting them to the true religion.

THE DEBATE AS PRESERVED BY MIR LAWHI

This essay is comprised of a translation of segments of the debate between Qummi and Majlisi Sr. The debate has not survived in its entirety, but we are fortunate to have major portions available in a unique manuscript held at the Mar‘ashi Library in Qom. This manuscript was compiled by a zealot preacher known as Mir Lawhi (d. after 1671), another prominent figure in the anti-Sufi front of the time.

TRANSLATION

[Invocation]

In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Two Worlds, and His blessings and peace on the best of His creation, Muhammad, and all his descendants.

Chapter 1, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . I have seen that lack of acquaintance with knowledgeable people has caused many of the Shi‘a and friends of ‘Ali b. Abu Talib, peace be upon him, to be deceived by monsters on the path of religion.

They have strayed far away from the path of law and religion, considering shouting, clapping, jumping,

whirling, and love-play with beardless boys to be worship and obedience. Therefore, I saw it as incumbent upon myself to help and guide them and return them to the high road of the Prophetic Shari‘a and the ‘Alid path.

Chapter 1, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] If the aim of our master [Qummi] is to guide some of the laity, who engage in inappropriate behavior due to their ignorance, that is not bad. But their behavior does not blemish the praiseworthy path of the saints, just as the behavior of ignorant students of religion does not blemish the pursuit of knowledge.

It would have been more appropriate for you to first describe the praiseworthy path of the saints, and then engage in disparaging the behavior of those who are not of that path.

First of all, it is possible that some of their movements stem from their vision of God’s majesty, or perhaps they lose self-control due to . . . the passion of their love for God, and certain words or deeds rise spontaneously from them.

For example, it is said that Junayd raised his hand while in a state of agitation, and when the state subsided, he brought his hand down with the help of the hands of

others, so that the act of bringing down his hand would not resemble that of raising it.

And even if they inadvertently do something, why do you assume that they consider it a virtue despite the fact that the greatest among them consider it a deficiency? Furthermore, it is not clear that these acts are religiously forbidden; it is merely common opinion [of the jurists]. And God guides toward the straight path.

Chapter 1, Section III

[Qummi responds:] . . . Let it be clear that I was hesitant to write a response to the respected cleric's [Majlisi's] discussions, so I resorted to [Qur'anic] divination (istikharah). The divination to write a response was favorable, while the divination not to write one was unfavorable, and thus I decided to respond. . . .

Before commencing with the response, it is fitting for me to outline my views on love (mahabbat) and desire (shawq), which are necessary for the folk of gnosis ('irfan), so that my reason for writing the treatise is made clear to the respected cleric.

Let it be clear that what I believe, and what is evident from the teachings of the Prophetic Household, is that God's servants worship him in three ways. Some

worship Him in order to attain paradise, which is the worship of a hired laborer. Others worship Him fearing hellfire, which is the worship of slaves. Still others worship Him out of love and desire, which is the worship of free men.

The path of the gnostics and those close to God, and the goal of the wise and sagacious in their mortifications and struggles, is to reach this path. Followers of every religion have taken many pains and undergone many mortifications on the path toward reaching this high station, setting off in every direction in search of their goal.

However, only those who have followed the Prophetic Household, those guides on the path of love, have reached the final destination. Those who have failed to follow them due to the deception of the monsters on the path of religion have perished in the desert of misguidedness.

This humble servant has gathered many hadith reported by the Prophetic Household on the topic of love and desire. Some time ago I began compiling a book on the subject, which I have titled Maqamat al-muhibbin, and which I hope to have the good fortune of finishing.

However, the pious worshippers and practitioners of mortification among the Sunnis who oppose the Prophetic Household have issued misguided personal opinions (ijtihadat) and reveled in corrupt fantasies as they traverse the valley of divine love, adding misguidedness to deviance, and creating innovations on the path of obedience.

. . . In the treatise, I mentioned signs of Sunni practitioners of mortification who follow Hallaj and Bayazid. Among the signs that I did not mention is that [members of] this group call themselves ‘ashiq (lit., lover) and attribute ‘ishq (lit, love) to God Almighty.

The Household of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, who are the guides on the path of love, have avoided using this term in their supplications and hadith because it is the name of a melancholic illness (sawdavi).

Rather, they are content to use the terms mahabbat (lit., love) and shawq (lit., desire), and their followers do the same. The path of love and desire that this humble servant has chosen is the path of the perfect gnostic Shaykh Safi [al-Din Ardabili], as well as that of Shaykh Varram b. Abu Furas, Ibn Tawus, Ahmad b. Fahd Hilli,

Mulla Ahmad Ardabili, and other Shi'i gnostics, may God bless them.

It should be clear from what I have said that my aim in writing this treatise is not to reject love and desire [for God] as the respected cleric has supposed, unleashing words of derision upon me. . . . How could this humble servant believe such a thing when I have written quatrains like the following?

[Quatrain]

O Lord, capture me with your love.

Consume my body in the fires of purification.

Pluck all neglect of God from my wings and feathers,

That I might fly to the pinnacle of your love.

Moreover, what impelled this humble servant to undertake the writing of the treatise was that when I entered Qom, the city of believers, a group of people told me that some in the town were claiming to have ascended to the heavens, returning with reports of the skies and purporting that a group of jinn had become servants of their Sufi lodge, and many ignorant people had joined them.

When I heard those words, my religious zeal was awakened, and I took efforts to refute and destroy them. . . . Now that my aim in writing this treatise is clear, I will begin my response to what the respected cleric has said, and God is the source of help.

In his gloss on the previous page, the respected cleric says that some of the movements of the saints could be caused by visions of God's majesty, and then he narrates Junayd's story. In no way could the movements we see from the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid be caused by God's love!

If that were the case, such behavior would have appeared among the companions of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, and among the companions of the imams, peace be upon them, who are the heralds of the gnostics and lovers, and it would have been recorded by the 'ulama' in their books.

The respected cleric should first prove, via Shi'i reporters of hadith, that Junayd was a Muslim and a believer, and then take him as his witness. And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 2, Section I

[Qummi says:] O Shi‘ites and friends of the Prophetic Household! Know that the above mentioned path is the path of the followers of Hallaj, Bayazid, and others like them. Beware of these ways and means, and do not follow this path.

[Quatrain]

Beware of straying from the path of the Shari‘a.

Do not step foot on the path of Hallaj.

For all paths outside the bounds of the Shari‘a,

Come to an end at the gallows.

[Quatrain]

If you venture off the path of ‘Ali and his descendants,

And fall in line with the followers of Hallaj,

If you wish to be a follower of Bayazid,

You will be resurrected tomorrow with Yazid.

Chapter 2, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] How strange that our master [Qummi] identifies the path of the realizers (muhaqqiqan) and the unifiers (muvahhidan) as that of

Hallaj, despite the fact that all the Sufi ‘ulama’ have disparaged Hallaj, and no one follows him.

Instead, all agree that this path is that of the Household of the Messenger of God. Because it is a highly difficult path, however, they [the imams] have not ordered everyone to embark upon it.

Instead, they provided guidance on this path to a [select] group among their apostles and close acquaintances, compelling them [to follow it], for it is not hidden from the insightful and knowledgeable.

Only some, however, bore this heavy burden and attained eternal felicity (sa‘adat), like Rushaid Hijri, Kumayl b. Ziyad Nakha‘i, Qanbar, Salman, Jabir Ju‘fi, and other companions privy to the secrets of the guiding imams.

The exoteric ‘ulama’ called into question the character and integrity of these people because they could not comprehend their status, though it is not hidden from those who search. And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 2, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric expresses surprise that I identified the path of saints with that of

Hallaj, and he further claims that all the Sufi ‘ulama’ have disparaged Hallaj. It is apparent from such statements that the cleric has not read the books of this group, not even Miftah al-Falah, nor has he heard Shaykh Shabistari say in Gulshan [Raz]:

If it is permitted for a tree to say, “I am God,”

Why is it not permitted for the good-fortuned one [that is, Hallaj]?

This book, Gulshan, is highly regarded by these people, so much so that Lahiji, one of their great scholars, wrote a commentary on it. In addition, Rumi, who is a prominent member of this group and whom you [Majlisi] consider to be your spiritual master, alluded to the greatness of Hallaj. . . . If you do your research, you will know with certainty that these people whom you emulate are all followers of Hallaj.

You have also said that this path was taught by the blessed Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, and by his descendants, peace be upon them, to Rushaid Hijri, Kumayl [b.] Ziyad, Qanbar, Salman, and Jabir Ju‘fi.

The respected cleric may deceive the laity with such statements, but when would they ever deceive those who have read the biographical literature (rijal)?

It is incumbent upon the respected cleric to inform us which of the words and deeds of this group, who are followers of the Household, are in accordance with the words or deeds of the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid. .

. .

If the path of the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid is correct, and if it is taken from the teachings of the Household, then it must be the case that the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid trace their path back to these few holders of the secrets of the Household.

On the contrary, however, we see that the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid do not trace their path back to such people. The names of Jabir, Rushaid, Kumayl, Qanbar, and Salman are not known among them and are not mentioned in their books.

Chapter 4, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . It is reported in the book *Tazkirat al-Awliya'* that one day a disciple of Bayazid said, "It is mentioned in a report from the blessed Messenger of God, may God bless him and his descendants, that [the

Prophet said], ‘on the day of resurrection, God, almighty and exalted is He, will kindly bestow upon me the flag of praise, and under that divine flag all the believers will gather.’ ”

The above-mentioned shaykh [Bayazid] replied, “By God, my flag is greater than the flag of Muhammad, may God bless him and his descendants.” God’s curse be on he who spoke those words!

It is also reported that someone asked Bayazid, “Why don’t you pray the night prayers?” He replied, “I don’t have time for prayers, I hover in the heavenly realm, and wherever I find a fallen one, I take his hand.” He also said, “I saw God in my dream. He asked me, ‘what do you want, Bayazid?’ I responded, ‘I want what you want.’ He said, ‘I am for you as you are for me.’ ” . . .

O Muslims! Consider these statements and be mindful of your own fate. Don’t follow these destroyers of God’s religion.

Chapter 4, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] I have mentioned that accusations leveled by ignorant people against the divine ‘ulama’ are not worthy of being heard, so it is not in accordance with the shari‘a to pay attention to such statements.

Furthermore, ‘Allamah Hilli, may God bless him, reported in his commentary on Tajrid that Bayazid was the water bearer of the blessed Imam Ja‘far Sadiq, may God bless him. Because it is relevant, [I will relate] a story that I heard from my mentor, Shaykh Baha’ al-Din Muhammad, may God bless him.

He said, “I was with the late king, Shah ‘Abbas, and we visited the imamzadah in Bistam. After that visit, we decided to pay a visit to the tomb of Bayazid. A Shirazi scholar was with us. ‘Why are we visiting the tomb of this Sunni?,’ that scholar objected . . . saying that Bayazid was the cause of the imamzadah’s death.

I replied, ‘O my king! ‘Allamah Hilli has reported in his commentary on Tajrid that he [Bayazid] was the water bearer at the home of Imam Ja‘far Sadiq, peace be upon him, and because he did that duty for a prolonged time and the blessed [imam] considered him capable of guiding the populace due to the mortifications and struggles that he underwent during the length of his service, he released him from his service and entrusted him to take his son with him to Bistam.

Eventually the people of Bistam quarreled over where the imamzadah should settle in their town, and this led to a fight. A stray stone hit the imamzadah, and he was

martyred. It is not even clear if the people of Bistam are to blame for this, because what happened, happened because of their love.’ ”

Other stories were also related about Bayazid’s virtues that are too long for this gloss. After those stories, [Shaykh Baha’i remarked], “I took the king to pay a visit to Bayazid’s tomb. As luck would have it, there on the gravestone was Rumi’s Masnavi. I said, ‘My king, let’s inquire about Bayazid’s status from Rumi’s divan.’ As we opened the book, the first line in the page we opened was:

Outwardly, you accuse Bayazid,

But inwardly, you would shame even Yazid.

After that, the king asked me to recite the ziyarat for him, and I did.”

In summary, if someone appears to be included among the righteous, it is against the shari‘a to repeat the gossip of unknown people and cause him to be cursed.

Even if such statements were made by this person, they are subject to interpretation, just as Shaykh Ruzbihan of Fars has done in his book, Sharh-i Ta‘vilat [sic] in which he reports such statements made by Sufis.

In most cases, these were expressed in the madness of love. Therefore, leaving aside other possible interpretations that are too long for this gloss, in accordance with reports and hadiths, it is obligatory to attribute [problematic] statements by the believers to precautionary dissimulation (taqiyyah) or other proper interpretations whenever possible.

[Furthermore,] if a group of people had faith in Bayazid, thinking that he was a servant of the blessed [imam] and that he was a Shi‘i, they would be rewarded even if, in reality, Bayazid was a cursed Sunni. This is especially true for the times of dissimulation, when they had to conceal their [religious] inclinations. How is it in accordance with the shari‘a to curse such people?

Chapter 4, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric, while praising the status of Bayazid, mentions that ‘Allamah Hilli, may God bless him, has said that Bayazid was the water bearer of the blessed Imam Ja‘far Sadiq. How strange that the respected cleric does not understand that being a water bearer does not make someone virtuous. Has he not heard of ‘Aisha, Hafsa, Noah’s son, and Ja‘far the Liar? . . .

He then narrates popular stories attributed to the Shaykh [Baha'i], may God bless him. . . . Doesn't he know that prognostication (fal) means to seek knowledge of the unseen, and to seek the unseen from Rumi's book or other books, without the permission of God, the Messenger, and the imams, peace be upon them all, is not allowed? . . .

As for divination (istikharah), we do that because the Household, peace be upon them, have permitted and taught it. Divination is different from prognostication, as is clear to any intelligent, insightful person. And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

. . . . The point made about their time being the time of dissimulation is true. Yet even during the time of dissimulation, the Shi'i 'ulama' and luminaries can not practice dissimulation in a way that Sunnis recognize them as saints while they remain unknown to the Shi'ites.

Chapter 5, Section I

[Qummi says:] The author of *Tabsirat al-'Avam* divides the followers of Hallaj into six groups and reports many of their heresies. In addition, he says in that book that Sunnis recognize this group [the Sufis] as saints and

miracle workers. There is much evidence of the truthfulness of what this knowledgeable man has said.

First, the Shi‘i ‘ulama’ of the past wrote books in which they gathered the names of [prominent] Shi‘ites and lovers of the household. In these books, they did not mention the name of any [prominent] Shi‘ite who was a denizen of a Sufi lodge, who engaged in ecstasy, sama‘ dancing, howling, or love-play, or who was said to have subscribed to a belief associated with the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid.

This is evidence that this path has never been known among the Shi‘ites. If it had been, they would have said so. Rather, this path has always belonged to the Sunnis. Sunni kings of all ages respected them [the Sufis] and built lodges for them.

Second, a handful of towns are known to be centers of Shi‘ism, such as Astarabad, Sabzavar, Jabal ‘Amil, Hilla, and Qom, the city of believers. None of these towns contains an ancient Sufi lodge, even though in Qom there are many ancient domes.

In Sunni towns, however, there are several ancient lodges. This is evidence that this path was not known among the Shi‘ites.

Chapter 5, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] The fact that there have been many Sunni Sufis is no cause for dismay. There have been many destroyers of knowledge and the ‘ulama’, but this does not blemish Sufism or knowledge. As for the fact that there was no Sufi lodge during the time of the imams; there were no madrasas then either!

If these are innovations, they are either permissible (mubah) or praiseworthy (mustahabb) innovations, as the martyred shaykh, may God bless him, has mentioned in his Qava‘id. As for retreats and seclusions, they are desirable for their role in reforming the soul that is susceptible to temptation (nafs-i ammarah).

If a group of people, especially seekers of knowledge, decide to undertake retreat and seclusion and engage in a struggle against their carnal soul with the aim of purifying their soul from the illnesses that surround the people of the world, this is the greater jihad and would not be reprehensible. Instead, it is the most important obligatory duty.

Chapter 5, Section III

[Qummi responds:] . . . It is true, as the respected cleric says, that seclusion aimed at struggling against the

carnal soul is not reprehensible, but only on the condition that it does not involve abandoning the traditions of the blessed Refuge of Prophecy, may God's blessing be upon him and his descendants, such as communal prayers in the mosque or attending to the needs of other believers.

The forty-day retreat customary among the followers of Hallaj, however, causes many of the traditions of the blessed Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, to be abandoned. Furthermore, it damages the brain and causes melancholia. Therefore, it should be avoided, and the path of the Household should be taken up in its stead. . . .

Chapter 8, Section I

[Qummi says:] An ignorant person might say that the path and beliefs of this group [the Sufis] are the religion of the Messenger and the Household, peace be upon them, but that they [the latter] did not share them with everyone because they were secrets, and thus they did not become widely known among the Shi'ites.

In response, I would say that anyone with the slightest shred of intelligence knows that if this were the path of truth that held the secrets of the sect, these secrets would have been withheld from the Sunnis. Our imams, who

are the Household of the Messenger, would have not taught such secrets to non-Shi'ites.

But on the contrary, we find that this path is famous among the Sunnis and those foreign to the Household, while at the same time, the friends of the Household and the Shi'i 'ulama' are ignorant of it. Thus it is clear that what the ignorant person has said is false and a lie.

Chapter 8, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] The correct belief is that the Sunnis do not share in this path, and that all who have shared in it have been Shi'ites, including Ibrahim Adham, Bayazid Bistami, Sana'i, Rumi, 'Attar, and others. They have also disparaged Sunni Sufis in their books, as is clear to the insightful person. And God guides whom He wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 8, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric is bold to make such unsubstantiated claims. If you make a claim, you should furnish evidence for it and stop acting like a layperson. And God guides whom He wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 16, Section I

[Qummi says:] Additional evidence [of their misguidedness] is that it is reported that their spiritual masters, Rumi and others, would bring reed flutes and other instruments to their sessions. This is said even now about the Mawlawi House in Baghdad. Such things are forbidden in the school of our imams. It is strange that some of the Shi‘i people have complete faith in Rumi despite the fact that he was an Uzbek and, as it is reported, a Sunni judge.

Sunnis have a firm belief in him and consider him their exemplar and respect his poetry enormously because they consider him a Sunni and do not see anything in his poetry that indicates he was a Shi‘ite.

It appears that some among the Shi‘ites, due to Rumi’s great praise for the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, have thought that he was a Shi‘ite, forgetting that this is not evidence of Shi‘ism.

In fact, the Sunnis known as the tafzili have written many books about the virtues of ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, peace be upon him, and the rest of the imams. They love them very much and consider ‘Ali b. Abi Talib to be most virtuous. At the same time, however, they love Abu Bakr and ‘Umar and consider them their caliphs. . . .

Chapter 16, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] It was noted above that what is commonly said by laypeople cannot be trusted. If Sunnis, according to their own belief, consider a Shi'ite to be a Sunni, that does not make that Shi'ite a Sunni. For example, Sunnis consider Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni, who was among the greatest hadith scholars of Shi'ism, to be a Sunni, and they visit his grave, which is adjacent to the Mawlawi House in Baghdad.

In fact, they consider all of our Imams to be Sunnis, and they have faith in them and visit their tombs. If some Sunnis believe that various instruments are permissible or carry out reprehensible acts and tell lies about the Messenger of God to the effect that he listened to instruments and held 'Aisha on his shoulder to see them being played, then why should it be surprising that they tell lies about Rumi?

The respected Rumi has expressed his devotion to the infallible imams, may God bless them all, in many of his odes, rejecting any association with their enemies and making his true religion clear. If, due to dissimulation, he praised some of the damned, he followed it immediately with lines like this:

I tell you a myth, be it false or true,
That it might highlight the truth.

Chapter 16, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric has erred tremendously here, because none of the Sunnis consider Muhammad b. Ya‘qub Kulayni to be a Sunni. Rather, they know him as a propagator of the religion of Shi‘ism. . . .

As for the claim that [Rumi] has mentioned the twelve imams in some of his odes, if that is true, it was noted above that merely mentioning the twelve imams and expressing friendship with them is not evidence of Shi‘ism. Rather, a Shi‘ite is someone who is well known as such among the Shi‘ites, or who has disparaged the usurpers of the rights of the Household.

Chapter 17, Section I

[Qummi says:] Another issue with the misguided one [Rumi] is that he was a disciple of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din (Ibn Arabi), and the latter is first and foremost among the damned. Further evidence [of their misguidedness] is that this group believes in determinism, and this is contrary to Shi‘ism. Some ignorant people have

complete faith in Mahmud Shabistari despite the fact that he says in his Gulshan [Raz]:

Whoever chooses a religion other than determinism,
Is said by the Prophet to be a Zoroastrian.

This couplet indicates that Shi‘ites are Zoroastrians because they do not believe in determinism. On the contrary, determinism is the belief of Sunnis, because they say whatever a servant of God does is caused by God, and that the servant has no choice in it.

In Favatih, [the author says that] Shaykh Muhyi al-Din has indicated that all the Sufis follow the school of determinism. It is truly surprising that some people, despite all their boasting about their Shi‘ism, have utmost faith in Shaykh Muhyi al-Din (Ibn Arabi). This man has said things in Futuhat that cannot be reconciled with Islam. . . .

In Favatih it is narrated that in chapter seventy-three of Futuhat this wretched man said, “Two pious men of the Shafi‘i School of law, whom no one suspected of Shi‘ism, were in the company of a Rajabi saint whom I had met before in Diyar Bekir. The latter said, ‘I see you in the form of pigs, and this is a sign between me and my God, for he reveals the Shi‘ites to me in such a

form.’ They repented in their heart of being Shi‘ites. ‘Now that you have repented,’ he said, ‘I see you in the form of humans.’ They confessed [that they had indeed been Shi‘ites] and were very surprised by this experience.”

O friends, do you see how much enmity this leader of the wretched has toward the friends of the Household? How could one consider him a Muslim?

It is also narrated in Favatih that he said, “Sainthood has been sealed with me,” and the commentator on the book Fusus narrated that, “Shaykh Muhyi al-Din went on a nine-month retreat and did not eat anything. Then, he was ordered to come out and was given the good news that he was the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood. . . .”

Chapter 17, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] . . . It is not known whether Shaykh Muhyi al-Din (Ibn Arabi) was evil, but signs of his Shi‘ism are apparent in his Futuhat. In his treatise titled Insha’ al-Dava’ir, he has explicitly confirmed the truth of the sect of Shi‘ism. There, in several chapters, he elaborates on the prophetic hadith “my community will be divided . . .”.

And then he says that the true religion is the religion of the twelve imams, and he described his revelations, saying, “In the realm of revelation, I saw the names of each of the infallible imams written on different portions of the holy quarters (haza’ir al-quds).” Finally, it is not farfetched to say that he praised some of the damned due to dissimulation.

In short, the knowledgeable man who has the capacity to understand the statements of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din will know the degree of his virtues and his status.

For example, our master Jalal [al-Din] Davani in Sharh Risalah-yi Zawra’ went out of his way to praise him. Our master Shams al-Din Khafri, Shaykh Baha’ al-Din, and Maulana Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) did similarly. Rather, all the realizers (muhaqqiqin) and meticulous researchers (mudaqqiqin) followed his footsteps.

Also, given that “to a believer, wisdom is [like something precious] that is lost,” and that [we are to] “look at what someone says, and not who says it,” no one should be deprived of his [Shaykh Muhyi al-Din’s] words of wisdom. If their intellect is unable to understand some of them, they should attribute that to shortcomings in their own understanding.

If he narrates some senseless thing that a group of people said on the topic of religion, it should be attributed to dissimulation so that people can benefit from the light that overflows from him.

Furthermore, these discussions are not suitable for the laity, and the consensus of this group [the Sufis] is that laypersons should not be allowed to read their books. Similarly, it is not permissible for them [the laity] to read the books of philosophers. Only those who have extensive knowledge can benefit from the writings of this group, for “man is the enemy of what he does not know.”

Chapter 18, Section I

[Qummi says:] It is mentioned in Favatih that in his commentary on Fusus, Jandi narrates that Shaykh Sadr al-Din heard this liar (khazzab) of a shaykh [Ibn ‘Arabi] say,

“When I reached the Mediterranean Sea from al-Andulus, I decided to board a ship. Suddenly, all the details of my inner and outer states up to the end of my life were revealed to me.

After intense concentration and complete meditation, all of your states from birth until death, and after death in

barzakh, as well as those of your father and your followers, were made clear [to me].”

O Shi‘ites and friends of the Household! See how these apostate irreligious people spread lies and destroy the religion of the Messenger? It is fitting that you rend your collars and cry tears of blood in mourning for religion. . . . It is ironic that a group of ignorant people who know nothing of their religious obligations wish to inform us about heavens.

In Kulayni’s book, he narrates a hadith report [to the effect] that the sign of a liar is that he brings news about heaven and earth and east and the west, but when asked about what is forbidden (haram) and what is permissible (halal), he does not know.

Chapter 18, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] If our respected master [Qummi], were cognizant of his own state, he would surely rend his own stomach, let alone his collar! I swear to God that I have no bias in favor of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din or others, but our master does not differentiate between concern for religion and concern for [his own] ego. If he better examined his own state, he would engage in reforming his soul.

Why is it so impossible to believe that someone, through extensive struggle and mortification, could acquire knowledge of the states of himself or others? It has repeatedly been reported that the infidels of India gain purity of soul as a result of mortification, and hadiths also report this.

So if a pious believer receives heavenly and earthly revelations as a result of self-mortification and struggle, by God it is true! Many great revelations happened to this servant [of God, that is, Majlisi] and many of the servants who were with me.

If our master is concerned with religion, he should engage for a while in mortifications, and if it avails him nothing, then he can write ten more books refuting this group. Unfortunately, love of position and prestige gets in his way.

When [mental] illnesses become chronic, extensive mortification is especially needed to rid oneself of such deadly traits so that the light of divine manifestation, and divine majesty and beauty, make themselves known.

Finally, all these stupid things that the Sunni has reported from some of Ibn ‘Arabi’s books, even if they are true, should be attributed to dissimulation. . . .

Shaykh Muhyi al-Din's time in Egypt was a prime time for dissimulation, because it was the period when Abbasid caliphs overcame the Isma'ilis and more than one hundred thousand Shi'ites were killed. If you and I had lived in such times, we would have dissimulated far more!

Chapter 18, Section III

[Qummi responds:] Let it be clear to the respected cleric that my lifestyle is comprised of following the Household of the Messenger and their hadiths. It appears that this lifestyle does not sound appealing to the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid.

Oh, Refuge of Justice (ʿidalat-panaha)! Why do you use these rude and unpleasant words? Are you not ashamed before God? How can someone who has reformed his ego in such a manner [that is, who says such rude things] give advice to others?

Besides, I mentioned that Muhyi al-Din (Ibn Arabi) numbers among the destroyers of religion, and thus finding a valid interpretation of his false statements only results in destruction to religion. Are you not ashamed before God for thinking so highly of this lost and misguided person?

The blessed Master of Prophets needed Gabriel to come down to inform him about the past and the future, and the blessed Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, depended upon the Prophet to teach and inform him. . . . It follows that the respected cleric considers this wretched person more perfect than prophets.

Even more surprising is the attribution of revelation to the infidels of India, even though the consensus of Muslims is that receiving news of the unseen is a miracle of the prophets and their successors.

That is what the Qur'an says, that God Almighty does not inform anyone of the unseen except for prophets: "Knower of the unseen, he does not reveal His unseen to anyone except a messenger of His choosing." (72: 26)

Regarding the respected cleric's claim of [receiving] revelations, it appears that this does not happen without causing damage to the brain. It seems that such revelations happen after the mortifications common among the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid, because their brains are damaged and the initial stages of melancholia kick in. Then they close their eyes and imagine another realm. They undertake journeys in that realm of imagination, and whatever they see they believe to be true.

If this were the path of truth, the Household of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, would have taught it to their companions.

Also, you have claimed that I love prestige and position. Can you tell me how you ascertained this? If it is among the things that have been revealed to you, beware of trusting your revelations, for they are the opposite of the truth.

In fact, if love of position had overtaken my soul, I would have refrained from talking about Hallaj and Bayazid to avoid the entire world entering into debate with me, because the majority of the laity are deceived by these people and infatuated with love for them.

Chapter 22, Section I

[Qummi says:] You should also know that this group, when they ostensibly achieve perfection, consider evil and good and faith and unbelief to be the same. That is why Rumi called the pharaoh Moses:

When the colorless fell captive to color,

One Moses went to battle against another Moses.

Anyone who gives this any thought would certainly conclude that this school is something other than the school of Shi‘ism.

Another argument is that they consider love-play with girls and boys to be a virtue and a means of unification with God Almighty. In Favatih, love-play has been attributed to the masters of this group, like Najm Kubra and Shaykh Ruzbihan.

However, in the school of our imams, it is known that love for this world and being attached to anyone other than God Almighty are condemned.

Moreover, this group of people has no interest in mosques, communal prayers, or other traditions of the Messenger, may God bless him and his descendants. Instead, much of the time they ruin their prayers by offering them in a Sufi lodge. The way of our imams is known to be contrary to this. It is reported that the prayers of one who lives near a mosque and performs his prayers at home will not be accepted.

Chapter 22, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] . . . If what you have said about love-play being the religion of this group is in reference to the laity, and the laity who seek knowledge are included

in this group, then the behavior of the laity cannot be considered evidence.

If you mean the elite, then they consider loving nothing but God to be infidelity. And if a Sunni reports an accusation about a group of people without legal (shar‘i) proof, it is not permissible to quote him . . .

Chapter 23, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . Dear ones, it appears that some have been deceived by this group because they have waxed eloquent about piety and asceticism in their books and explained how to struggle against the carnal soul and offered remedies for each of the illnesses of the soul.

They think this is what Sufism is, and they know nothing of their false beliefs, and they do not realize that there are some in every religion who engage in self-mortification and struggle against the carnal soul, especially among the Christians, including the Franks (farangi) and Armenians.

Another argument for the falseness of this group’s path is that they believe in Oneness of Being (vahdat-i vujud). That is, they think nothing exists but God, and that whatever exists is identical to God. They use the metaphor of the sea and the waves; God is like the sea,

and all creatures are like the waves of the sea. Though each wave appears in our imagination as something other than from the sea, in reality it is identical with it. What we know of the path of our imams, peace be upon them, indicates the falseness of this statement.

It seems that the followers of Hallaj have learned this belief from the Christians. I heard that some Armenian ascetics are said to have said, “In our religion, Oneness of Being is similar to [the beliefs of] your hermits (ghushah-nashinan).” Also, I heard some Frank ascetics of Baghdad express beliefs that were identical to the beliefs of this group.

Chapter 23, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] There is no doubt that the monsters on the path are many, and it is necessary for everyone to stay far from their sayings and deeds. Such monsters have always been there, on both sides of the path [that is, on the Sufi path and the path of the jurists].

It is incumbent upon the disciple of God Almighty to follow a person whose appearance is adorned with the light of the shari‘a and whose soul is purified internally from wickedness, someone clothed inwardly and outwardly with the ways of the Household who does not consider himself safe from the deceptions of the carnal

soul. Such people are extremely rare in our time. As [the hadith says], “my saints are under my cloak; no one knows them except for me.”

Furthermore, it is not permissible for the laity to read most books by Sufis, because some of them were Sunnis, and thus Sunni and Shi‘i are mixed up together; this in addition to the fact that the Shi‘is practiced dissimulation.

It is therefore incumbent upon all to seek religious knowledge from the divine ‘ulama’. After acquiring this knowledge, [they may] turn to the purification of their soul via mortifications and struggles under a perfect spiritual master.

They must also avoid making statements about Oneness of Being and the like, because such statements are, on their surface, equivalent to disbelief and apostasy. They have very nuanced and precise meanings that not everyone can comprehend — so much so that it is not clear whether even the knowledgeable ‘ulama’ who believed in it, like Mawlana Jalal [al-Din Davani], Mawlana Shams al-Din Muhammad Khafri, and others, in fact understood it.

This is because understanding such meanings is beyond the reach of reason. Until the unveiling light is acquired

after much mortification and struggle, one cannot hope to receive a glimpse of it. Shaykh Baha' al-Din Muhammad, may God bless him, . . . said,

“One day, a virtuous person in town named Mawlana Khajah Jan came to me and said, ‘Last night I pondered extensively until I understood the meaning of the Oneness of Being.’ I replied, ‘Who is your spiritual master (pir)?’ He responded, ‘What does that word mean?’ I asked, ‘How many mortifications have you undergone?’ ‘None,’ he answered. ‘Clearly,’ I said, ‘the meaning that you have understood is different than that which the Sufis have in mind, because they all agree that the meaning of Oneness of Being can only be revealed to someone who has served under a perfect master and undergone mortifications for forty years. It is clear that what you have understood, without a spiritual master and without mortifications, is different from what Sufis say. Please do not tell others about this so as not to cause complications.’ ”

Chapter 23, Section III

[Qummi responds:] This is a discussion that the respected cleric has already had, and the response is that it is true that the ‘ulama’ can be divided into two groups.

One group is beautified with the adornment of shari‘a; these are the guides of religion and the trusted people of the Lord of the Two Worlds.

The other group has been infected by their love for this world and follows their tempting soul; they are the destroyers of religion. As for the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid, they are all monsters on the path. May God Almighty protect the followers of the Household from the evils of this group!

Source: Anzali, Ata. “Opposition To Sufism In Safavid Iran: A Debate Between Mulla Muhammad-Tahir Qummi And Mulla Muhammad-Taqi Majlisi”. *The Empires of the Near East and India: Source Studies of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Literate Communities*, edited by Hani Khafipour, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 128-149.

8. The lightening strike: al-shihab al-thaqib by Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi – Dr. Sajjad Rizvi

Sufis had been recipients of court patronage and constituted a clear threat to claims of clerical authority articulated by the Usulis and required both a political and an intellectual response. Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali (d. 1820)’s main work in this endeavour was al-shihab al-thaqib [the lightening strike], again written in Arabic for scholars and dedicated to his patron Sarfaraz al-Dawla Hasan Riza Khan. The text begins with an eloquent proemium in rhyming prose (saj‘) to demonstrate his ability in Arabic.

He laments the fact that people are turning to Sufi shaikhs, away from the teachings of the Prophet and his successors who are the true authorities and proofs of God. To this end, he cites two themes of anti-Sufi writing well attested in Safavid works. First, the Caliphs in early Islam had promoted Sufis and philosophers to turn people away from the family of the Prophet. He cites the example of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mun (d. 833) who tried to humiliate the eighth Shi‘i Imam ‘Ali al-Rida (d. 818) by setting up disputations with theologians and philosophers, using “heresy” to create

discord and strife and distract people from the Imams. Sufism was thus a conspiracy to destroy Shi‘ism.

Second, the Imams themselves had condemned Sufis as “representatives of Satan”, and had condemned philosophers as corruptors of the people. The very survival of Shi‘ism was only due to the diligence and courage of the “true ‘ulama” who had opposed Sufis and philosophers and “made their heresy and unbelief” clear to the community. It is the scholars who had, and have, the authority to condemn heresy and provide guidance for the people. Since the ‘ulama are arbiters of the true faith, they have the authority and obligation to fight against heresy. It is therefore clear that Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali’s argument is concerned with bolstering his own authority, and that of his class of jurists opposed to Sufism.

In the Safavid period, with the work in particular of Mulla Tahir Qummi (d. 1098/1688), one discerns this connection between the illegitimacy of Sufism and philosophy, especially because the latter entails an acceptance of the doctrine of being espoused by the former – and this is clear in *al-Fawa’id al-diniya* [Religious Arguments] and *Hikmat al-‘arifin* [Philosophy of the mystics]. In these texts, the doctrine of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) espoused by the

Sunni Sufi Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240) is condemned in particular – and it is instructive that Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali spends most of his time delegitimising this doctrine after a careful reformulation of it.

Al-Shihab al-thaqib is divided into four sections and a conclusion.

The first section, comprising eight chapters, examines the doctrine of being as expressed by Sufis, philosophers and theologians and is a rational consideration of their argument, designed to show that the Sufi position on the unity of being, that all that exists is a singular reality whose referent is ultimately God, is not only intellectually indefensible and demonstrably false (in the standard Aristotelian sense of proof) but also confused.

The second section, divided into six chapters, examines the scriptural texts adduced by Sufis, including Shi‘i Sufis like Sayyid Haidar Amuli (d. 1385), whose ideas and works were popular in India, in favour of the doctrine of the unity of being. Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali’s strategy here is not only to draw into question the reliability and probity of these texts, which in many cases of sayings attributed to the Prophet and the Imams are questionable in their ‘authenticity’ but also to raise

the hermeneutical problem of how one ought to read and make sense of them. Where the texts are indisputable, such as Qur'anic verses and some of the hadith, the argument that draws upon them to prove unity of being is disputed and disproved.

The third section then moves onto claims made by Sufis. It is divided into two parts. The first disputes the validity of claims of inner revelation: Sufis claimed that they understood reality and could even verify texts through some process of inspiration or even revelation known as *kashf*. Deconstructing the notion of *kashf* and the claims and statements of famous (Sunni) Sufis of the past is an important element of his method in this section. Secondly, it could be taken as an indirect critique of Akhbari methodology since their thinkers, such as Shaikh Yusuf al-Bahrani (d. 1772), claimed to use *kashf* to verify the authenticity of sayings of the Prophet and the Imams. Part of the critique of *kashf* relates to the implication that it suggests a shortcoming on the part of the Prophet and the Imams – surely, as representatives of God, they should have informed their community of the truth of things. Their inability to do so is therefore shown up by the claims of Sufis to “know better”.

The second part of this section relates to the “innovations of Sufis”, their embrace of music and

dance as ritual practice – an important established theme of Safavid anti-Sufi texts – and their socially transgressive promotion of libertinism. A common feature of heretication, clearly manifest in anti-Sufi texts as early as the medieval period, is the accusation of sexual licentiousness.

The final aspect of this section relates to the “numerous sects” among Sufis. Consistent with heresiographical method, Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali’s enumeration of the sects among Sufis – he draws upon earlier texts such as *Hadiqat al-Shi‘a* [Garden of the Shi‘a] from the middle of the seventeenth century – is designed to show that if these people were so correct about their vision of reality, why did they disagree so much among themselves?

The fourth section is an attempt to respond to calumnies projected by Sufis against the jurists and an attempt at refuting them.

Divided into six chapters, the conclusion makes it clear why Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali believes it necessary to write a condemnation of Sufism. First, he has a duty to enjoin good and forbid evil (an important obligation in Shi‘i theology) and as he sees Sufism as an evil, he is obliged to warn people. Second, he has a duty to warn people to steer clear of gatherings of innovation (*bid‘a*): the social

popularity of Sufi practice in the towns of Awadh necessitates this warning. Third, since it is prohibited to follow the enemies of the faith – and here he means Sunni Sufis, who distract people from following the Imams and their representatives the Shi‘i jurists – he must warn them of this prohibition. Fourth, it is permissible, and indeed required, to curse innovators – and Sufis, as the texts cited by him from the Imams make clear, are innovators. Fifth, belief in the unity of being is clear heresy and must be proclaimed as such. Finally, as a jurist with a theological and moral obligation, he must call people to repent – once people are convinced of the evil of Sufi ideas and practices, they can repent and return to the fold of the faith.

He follows up this text with a Persian version that is shorter entitled *Risala-yi radd-i mazhab-i sufiya* [Refutation of the religion of the Sufis].

While there is much in it that follows earlier Safavid patterns, Sayyid Dildar ‘Ali makes his own contributions, especially in his exposition of the philosophy of being in the first section, demonstrating his skill in the tradition of Mulla Sadra (d. 1635), on whose *Sharh al-hidaya* [Commentary on the guidance], the main philosophical text of the *dars-i nizami*, he wrote a marginalia.

What is remarkable about this anti-Sufism is its condemnation of the doctrine of the unity of being. While this focus is clear in Safavid sources, there are also particular reasons for this, deriving from his context.

First, we know that the school of Ibn ‘Arabi and the doctrine of the unity of being was the dominant idea of Awadh Sufis, both among the Chishtiya and others, including major figures who were associated with the court. Shah ‘Ali Akbar Husaini Mawdudi Chishti of Faizabad (d. 1210/1795), who led his own Friday prayers (at a shrine in Ayodhya) that were frequented by Shi‘a and patronised by the vizier Sayyid Hasan Riza Khan and Shah Khairullah Naqshbandi, was one such prominent individual.

Mawdudi was a descendent of the founder of the Chishti order, a sayyid and known to have tafzili views (preferring ‘Ali over Abu Bakr on the issue of succession to the Prophet). Hence, he was seen as a philo-Shi‘i, and a proponent not only of the use of devotional music but also an ardent defender of the monism of Ibn ‘Arabi. He was an influential person at court.

Implicitly the attack was on the Shah Wali Allah tradition, associated with the major theological figure of Delhi whose influence extended to Awadh and who was also known to have penned anti-Shi'i polemics. An attack on the unity of being was, therefore, intended to discredit and delegitimise such claims to religious authority.

Second, the doctrine of the unity of being was popular among the Sunni 'ulama of Farangi Mahall who had traditionally provided the services of scholarship and justice for the Awadh state, and was therefore an attack on their legitimacy. Precursors of this are clear in the biographical sources that claim Sayyid Dildar 'Ali bettering both 'Abd 'Ali Bahr al-'ulum and Mulla Hasan in debate.

Third, anti-Sufism was a major theme in the thought of Sayyid Dildar 'Ali's teachers in Iraq – indeed, the son of Bihbahani wrote perhaps the major Persian anti-Sufi polemic of the period, the *Risala-yi khayratiya*.

Finally, the position on unity of being was also an attempt to enhance his own theological method since it was a doctrine that was already popular among Shi'i scholars both in Iran and India. As such, he was drawing a line under the Safavid tradition that was open to such

speculative metaphysics and mysticism and, instead, trying to return to a more pristine Shi‘i theology.

Source: Sajjad Rizvi, “Faith Deployed for a New Shi‘i Polity in India”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 24 (3): Isna ‘Ashari and Isma‘ili Shi‘ism: from South Asia to the Indian Ocean, July 2014, pp. 363 – 380.

